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ISBN 0-315-55386-3

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE SOURCES OF SELF-ESTEEM
IN SIX NATIVE ADULTS

BY

JIM HENRY

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND
RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF EDUCATION

IN

COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
FALL, 1989

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR: Jim Henry

TITLE OF THESIS: The Sources of Self-Esteem in Six Native Adults

DEGREE: Masters of Education

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: Fall, 1989

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

THE UNDERSIGNED CERTIFY THEY HAVE READ, AND RECOMMEND TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH FOR ACCEPTANCE, A THESIS ENTITLED The Sources of Self-Esteem in Six Native Adults SUBMITTED BY Jim Henry IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF EDUCATION IN COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY.

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Date: Sept 28, 1989

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to provide an initial step in identifying the sources of self-esteem in native adults. After a critical review of the literature on self-esteem and native education a number of issues influencing the reliability and validity of research in this field are discussed.

The six Natives (three males and three females) who participated in the study ranged in age from early twenties to late forties. Three were status Indians and three were Metis.

Data was collected on an individual basis. The subjects were interviewed; these interviews were taped and later transcribed verbatim. A thematic analysis was performed and later verified with each subject. Both individual and group themes were identified and later discussed from the point of view of Coopersmith's four antecedents of self-esteem - significance, competence, power and virtue.

The major positive influences included family and extended family - especially grandparents and mothers - as well as teachers. The major negative influences included racism, alcohol abuse, and violence in the home. A pattern of self-esteem development was seen to emerge and is discussed. Aspects of the subjects' cultural background were seen to - in and of themselves - be sufficient to promote high self-esteem. These include the influence of the family and extended family. Aspects of their home life and upbringing were seen to - in and of themselves - be capable of seriously damaging healthy self-esteem. These include racism and the effects of alcoholism.

All the self-esteem programs in the world will not help native children if they are living under the debilitating effects of violence and alcoholism in their homes, and racism and constant rejection in their schools. Native children may come to white schools with the seed of healthy self-esteem firmly in place, only to have it destroyed. We must not only focus on how to build high self-esteem, but must also consider how existing levels are often being destroyed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. William Hague for his constant involvement in this thesis. My unannounced and unscheduled visits to his office were too numerous to count. He was always there - except when he had dashed off to Russia, Egypt or Poland - and his kind words and 'non-Rogerian' direction not only kept me going, but constantly encouraged me to do things my own way. Thanks Bill.

I would also like to thank the members of my committee - Carl Urion and Dustin T. Shannon-Brady - for their time and effort. Carl provided the invaluable native perspective, which kept me honest and provided many insights.

As well I would like to acknowledge the six people whose experiences added depth, vigor and life to this study, and who taught me a heck of a lot in the process.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Overview

I began this thesis with a personal interest in this area of study and with a number of presuppositions and biases that I feel - in order to maintain proper perspective - require mentioning. I come to this work with both the view that high self-esteem is important and that in some circumstances Indian children demonstrate lower levels of it than do white children. My interest in this area stems from a number of sources. I lived on a reserve and taught Indian children for three years. As well I have worked for two Indian Bands for an additional three years developing materials in the areas of self-esteem and creative writing. I have seen low self-esteem manifested in high suicide rates, solvent, drug and alcohol abuse, as well as high crime rates.

I have developed a bias over the past number of years after having worked more closely with the native people. I believe there is a conflict of values. I believe there is a rift that often exists between school and community, with the community tending to see the school as "white". I believe that Indian education should become progressively more under the control of the Indian people. I also believe that teachers affect self-esteem levels - both positively and negatively - and that regarding self-esteem enhancement, believe they can't do it all. The problems - and solutions - are also linked directly to the family. Programs with white, middle-class biases, based on statistics gathered by white researchers, have often been unsuccessfully implemented by white administrators. I believe that the Indian people know more about what will contribute to high self-esteem than they are given credit for.

This study is highly subjective and in some respects removed from the more traditional view of scientific objectivity. In the field of self concept and native people, as I will discuss later, some of the "objective" work to date is inappropriate and even in some cases completely invalid. I do not believe that a completely subjective approach to research is sufficient. I do believe, however, that it holds an extremely important place. It may well be that in the studies of self-esteem and Indian people to date, it wasn't the answers and results that were invalid, but rather the questions and the very methods themselves. Traditional scientific objectivity can provide us with a great number of valuable answers - providing we ask the right questions.

B. Aim of Thesis

A great deal of research has been done in the field of self-esteem and its correlates and antecedents, and while sampling has comprehensively included white, minority and mixed culture populations, little work has been done in attempt to identify the antecedents of self-esteem for the Indian population (Luftig, 1982; Edeburn and Gipp, 1978). Though high self-esteem has been heralded for decades as a worthwhile pursuit, towards which our educational systems should be actively aspiring (Coopersmith, 1984; Battle, 1981b; Tunney, 1984; Berliner and Casanova, 1985), it has been argued (Luftig, 1982; Cardinal, 1970) that because of major cultural differences, self-esteem programs for white children are not directly transferable to populations of Indian school children. One of the most common objections is that research into the self-concept development of Indian children has been almost invariably carried out by white researchers who are often viewed as "outsiders" and whose methods, interview formats, and instruments may carry a white, middle-class bias (Fuchs and Havighurst, 1973). If, as many educators claim, high self-esteem is of great importance, and if established programs are not appropriate to native populations, then are we not neglecting these children? For these reasons I believe that research in this area is not only warranted - but needed.

My goal here is to take a needed first step. I would like to clarify not the answers that must be found, but rather the questions that must first be asked. It is an initial step leading towards a more solid, valid and reliable method of discovering the antecedents of self-esteem in Indian people. If these programs stress culturally inappropriate aspects in the educational process, which are culturally appropriate? The literature emphasizes and attempts to identify what does not lead to high self-esteem in Indian people. I want to know what does. The overall aim of this thesis then, is to identify the influences and experiences - both positive and negative - that contributed to the self concept development in six native people.

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II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Self-Esteem Research

Self-esteem has been linked to mental health (Wylie, 1961); social interaction (Coopersmith, 1984); levels of anxiety (Piers and Harris, 1970); depression (Battle, 1981); and even to physical health (Piers and Harris, 1970; Fitts, 1965; Coopersmith, 1975). The greatest focus in self-esteem research, however, considers the link to school achievement (Coopersmith, 1959; Horowitz, 1962; Brookover, Thomas and Patterson, 1964; Purkey, 1970; Dinkmeyer, 1971; Leviton, 1975). It has been claimed (Allen, 1984) that the way children see themselves will have more influence upon them than any other single factor. Coopersmith (1984) claimed that self-esteem should not be considered a luxury option, but rather a basic component of learning. From the viewpoint of practicality, Tunney (1984) argues that in order to maximize the abundant time, money and effort devoted to the education process, everyone in education should help to build student self-esteem.

Since its listing as a major subject heading in the mid 1960's there have been literally thousands of articles written on the topic of self esteem. Two things become quickly apparent when reading through the literature. First, self-esteem in not easy to define and secondly, all definitions are not equal. Researchers differ not only in attempts to define self-esteem, but also in the antecedents they propose lead to its growth and development.

Self-Concept Defined

A term that surfaces almost invariably in the self-esteem literature is self-concept. Most researchers claim an important link between self-esteem and self-concept and some to the degree of erroneously using the two interchangeably. I would like to first consider some of the existing definitions of both of these constructs.

Writers almost invariably claim a close union between self-esteem and self-concept. Self-concept has been called a broad, generic term that includes self-esteem (Crosby, 1982). It has been referred to as the system of ideas and attitudes that make up our inner world (Pangrazi, 1982) and as the organization of all that is "I" or "me" (Lange-Reck, 1982). More commonly self-concept is considered to be the totality of the perceptions we have of ourselves (Coppersmith, 1967; Schilling, 1986).

Self-Esteem Defined

There are two main approaches to defining this construct, and though similar and related, are not identical. Some consider self-esteem to be an evaluation of self-concept, while others consider it to be the "feeling" that results from this evaluation. Attitude vs. affect. Coopersmith (1984) claims that self-esteem refers to the "evaluation a person makes and customarily maintains with regard to him or herself." It expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval. Branden (1969) explains this dilemma by proposing that this value-judgement is not experienced in the form of a conscious verbal judgment, but in the form of a feeling that is hard to isolate because it is felt constantly. The emotion is the product of the evaluation. Studstill (1985) claims that self-esteem has both an evaluative and emotional aspect, while Tuttle (1984) writes that self-esteem is the affective component of self-concept.

B. Self-Esteem and Indian Education

Overview of the Literature

At first glance one might conclude that a good deal of research is available in the area of self-esteem and native people. Closer scrutiny, however, illustrates that the potential for drawing conclusions and making generalizations within this "body" of research may be greatly hindered.

As well as the conceptual and educational papers covered in this literature review, I have also examined nearly two dozen research studies (see appendix 2). In these twenty-two studies, twenty-six different instruments were used to measure the self-concept and self-esteem scores. Some researchers (Benjamin, 1973; Lefley, 1974; Frey, 1980; Huggman, Sill and Brokenleg, 1986) utilized instruments developed specifically for that particular study. Others employed measures that were used with native people only once during the past two and a half decades (Lammers, 1969; Martig and DeBlassie, 1973; Withycombe, 1973; Cockerman and Blevins, 1976; Chadwick and Bahr, 1977; Edeburn and Gipp, 1978; George and Hoppe, 1979; Rampaul, Singh and Didyk, 1984; Bruneau, 1985). True comparisons between the studies can therefore be made in very few cases.

There is very little "discussion" between the articles, where references are made to previous research. The exception to this is where identical instruments were employed, and unfortunately the highest number of repeated uses of a single instrument is four (Heaps and Morril, 1969; Corrigan, 1970; Bognar, 1981; Tempest,1985). The authors all used the Tennessee Self-Concept scale (TSC) but only in two of the cases were identical cultural groups compared . The closest direct comparison I could find - in the entire literature review - utilized the TSC to measure the self-concept of Navajo youth in Arizona. Even here, however, the sample ages differed. Heaps and Morril (1969) worked with high school students, while Tempest (1985) measured the scores of seventh and eighth graders. These studies were carried out with a span of nearly twenty years between them - not to mention that the findings of the two differed dramatically. This will be discussed in more detail below.

Only two studies utilized the Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) (Coopersmith,1984). Martin (1978) used this instrument to conclude that as native youth reach adolescents their self-esteem levels dropped. Cress and O'Donnel (1975), however, compared SEI scores with numerous "culturally appropriate measurements and observations" and concluded that the SEI was an inappropriate measure for use with their Indian youth. They declared it invalid. This will also be discussed in more detail below. With this perspective I would like to now discuss the findings of the existing literature.

As in many areas, the literature in the area of self-esteem and Indian education is inconsistent and studies of American Indian populations have generated contradictory findings (Lafromboise and Boesch, 1986). I will first give a brief overview of these inconsistencies and then look at the studies in more detail.

Much discussion deals with self-concept and self-esteem in connection with measures of social distress. Much of the research indicates that Indian children have lower self-concepts and a higher degree of conflict than whites (Corrigan, 1970; Rosenthal, 1974; Thornburg, 1974; Cockerman and Blevins, 1973; Tempest, 1985) and that they are more withdrawn and demonstrate more depression (Cockerman and Blevins, 1973). Other studies demonstrate an unusually high unemployment rate (Kirkness, 1980) and an unacceptably low academic success rate (Mohawk, 1985), and there are startling statistics about suicide and alcohol and drug abuse (Brown, 1986).

There are, however, contradictions. Not all research points to negative findings. Significant differences between Indians and whites have also been found to appear only at junior high levels (Martin,1978), while Lammers (1970) found no significant cross cultural differences, and some researchers have found positive self concepts in Indian populations (Fuchs and Havighurst, 1972; Benjamin, 1973; Dreyer, 1970). Luftig (1983) emphasizes how this lack of consolidation of the relevant literature has made findings difficult for educators to locate, not to mention interpret.

In short, there are studies demonstrating lower self-concepts in Indian children, but the findings are not unanimous. There are numerous problems that arise when the question of cultural differences is considered. These include conflicting value systems, inappropriate measurement techniques, and the problem of generality. I would next like to consider the literature in more detail, under the sub-headings of Negative Self Concept, Positive Self Concept, and No Differences Found.

Negative Self Concept

Francis Corrigan (1970) used the Tennessee Self Concept Scale (TSCS) to study the self concepts of seven tribes of American Indian students and found that for nine of the eleven TSCS scores utilized, the Indian student group means were significantly lower than the normative group means. As well the Indian student group displayed significantly greater conflict. Following reports of Navajo student underachievement, Tempest (1985) felt that the students' self concept should be evaluated as a possible contributing factor. The thirty-three seventh and eighth graders were found to be generally high in conflict and low in self concept. Rosenthal, (1970) found that from 73% to 89% of all school-age children on a Chippewa reserve demonstrated lower self-concepts than a white control group.

In a study involving 22 public schools Martin (1978) concluded that Indian and white children demonstrate significant differences in self esteem levels (with whites being significantly higher), though only after reaching junior high. This difference persists throughout the high school grade levels. Halpin, Halpin and Whiddon (1981) compared the self-esteem levels of 12-18 year old American Indians with that of 128 white students within the same age range and found that whites reported a significantly more positive view of the self than did the Indians. Friesen (1974) found that Indian children, compared with non-Indian children, exhibited lower levels of self-esteem, confidence in human nature and confidence in the future. As well a group of Sioux Indian students were found to be more depressed and withdrawn than white children (Bryde, 1970).

Luftig (1983) claims that almost all available data point to the conclusion that native American children view themselves more negatively than their white counterparts, and that the - largely unsuccessful - attempts to enhance self-esteem have been predicated on white behavior patterns and value systems.

Positive Self Concept

Fuchs and Havighurst (1973) report that a nation-wide sample of Indian youth viewed themselves as fairly competent persons in their own social world and also in comparison to non-Indian youth of similar socioeconomic status. They argue that Indian youth do not generally feel depressed, inferior or powerless.

Cockerham and Blevins (1973) contend that type of school - open vs. traditional - relates directly to self-identification. They hypothesized that the flexible learning environment and informal teaching methods of open schools would relate to certain core Indian values, such as emphasis upon cooperation, sharing and individual responsibility for decision making. They found that the open school Indians demonstrated a significantly more positive self-identification than traditional school students, either Indian or white.

In comparing four different native groups (Alaska Inuit students), Benjamin (1973) reported that the general characteristics of the Inuit self concept were positive with some negative aspects. They saw themselves as friendly, helpful and kind, but not particularly strong, good looking or smart. Heaps and Morrill (1969) reported that despite economic conditions, the Navajo culture provides the basis for a positive self concept among those who maintain traditional values.

Scruggs and Mastropieri (1983) observed significant differences by ethnic group when comparing whites and American Natives, however, they found larger differences between males and females in both whites and Natives (with boys scoring higher than girls). Dinges and Hollenbeck (1978) found that under standardized conditions, Navajo primary school children rated themselves low in self-esteem, but that when the test rationale was communicated to the students, self-esteem scores significantly increased.

No Differences Found

In a study involving four Labrador communities - one Native, one Inuit and two white - Bognar (1981) found no significant differences in conflict between communities though did find that in general native people scored lower on the self-criticism scale. In response to Felker's (1974) findings that the feelings children develop about themselves are formed primarily during the preschool years, Bruneau (1985) wanted to explore the influence of age and race on self-concept. She found no significant differences between native American and Anglo American preschoolers on a measure of school-related self concept. Lammers (1969) compared the self concepts of two groups of Onondaga Indians (one group educated in a segregated elementary school and the other in a desegregated elementary school) and a group of white children attending junior high school. He found no significant evidence to indicate that differences in self concept existed between the groups.

C. Native People and Self-Esteem

Despite the inconsistencies and contradictions, the majority of the literature does tend to support the claim that native students experience lower self-esteem than their white counterparts. Rather than attempting to refute this claim I would prefer instead to attempt to offer some degree of explanation as to why this may be so, and will do so by discussing two main categories.

1. Why Native Self-Esteem is Lower
2. Low Native Self-Esteem: The Myth of the 'Facts'

Why Native Self-Esteem is Lower

History and its Effect on Native Self-Esteem

Chan (1984) suggests that the self concept, self identity and self worth of Canadian Indians has been demeaned for nearly a century. Brown (1986) points out that changes were forced upon the American Indians much more quickly than they were ready to accept. These dramatic changes - especially during the mid-1800's when tribes were forced to live on reservations against their will - have affected Indian self-identity and self-esteem. Indian children were made to feel ashamed to be who they were by the residential school missionary teachers who forbid them to speak their own language and express their cultural heritage. We are only one generation removed from the residential schools.

Culture and Education

Forced adaptation of cultural traditions and values has resulted in poor academic performance and negative feeling about self and school on the part of the minority child (Sando, 1974). Minority students often "learn" under conditions that are not consonant with their learning styles, habits, values and inclinations (Gay, 1978). Violet Brown (1986), a native American Bilingual teacher believes that self-identity and self-esteem must be integrated into the curriculum, since a child with low self-esteem can be at risk academically. Martig and DeBlassie (1973) found that Indian first-graders - more so than white children - saw themselves as more rejected by adults. They propose that Indian children may see adults in school as threatening to their self-esteem and that this factor in turn produces a retarded school attainment. Youngman and Sadongei (1974) point out that when the American Indian culture reinforces cooperation, shared property and reticence, and when the dominant culture conversely rewards competition, personal property, and verbalization, schooling is apt to have a negative effect of self-concept functioning of native children. It is not surprising then, that there is evidence that the self concept of native school children is negatively correlated with chronological age and years of schooling (Wicker, 1977).

Hathhorn (1971) contends that the low self-esteem of native students is reinforced as a result of the educational process. Bilingual native students found that difficulty in understanding the textbooks - in their second language - resulted in a serious blow to their self-confidence and self-esteem (McGreevy 1984). Many times the non-Indian teacher who does not understand the child's Indian culture will make statements that disagree with it.

Cultural Conflict

Indian children in today's society have to live biculturally, and in some cases bilingually (Brown, 1986). They must often endure changes not commonly experienced by white students. Many exist within a dual-culture, interacting in a classroom setting during the daytime and at night leaving for home and enter a world with not only a different language, but a culture that maintains a different - and often conflicting - set of values.

Native students are often forced into situations that result in cultural conflict. Huffman, Sill and Brokenleg (1986) emphasize the challenge faced by native American students as they interact on two cultural levels simultaneously. White students entering college are not entering an alien cultural setting, but are rather moving into another aspect of it. Native

American students, on the other hand, bring a sense of their cultural identity to a college setting that is oriented towards a different set of values and goals (Edgewater, 1981). Because of the differences in value systems, being motivated to succeed according to the values of the dominant culture, a native student may have to, in some ways, reject his parents and their teachings (Edgewater, 1981). The cultural confusion also brings the native student to an additional stressful cross-roads where she must face the decision of assimilating with the white culture or maintaining traditional ties with her own (Edgewater, 1981).

The topic of cultural confusion is a controversial one. As mentioned above, some educators believe that the balancing act of living simultaneously within two cultures is a major hurdle for Natives to overcome in achieving high levels of self-esteem. Others, however, acknowledge the presence of two distinct cultures, but claim that the effect on personal development is minimal. The actual effect of living biculturally is still uncertain. That many native children live this experience every day of their lives, however, is not.

Family Environment

Tempest (1985) discovered that her sample of Navajo Indian students were forced to deal with a disproportionate amount of emotional trauma. Fifty-eight per cent of the families have a family member with alcoholism and twenty one per cent of these families have dealt with violence that involved the law. Indian children who come from alcoholic family settings not only experience an undue amount of distress because of the family environment, but not uncommonly are also forced into a role reversal within the family. Often the oldest child becomes responsible for the rest of the children. The parents, while drinking, will give children large amounts of money to buy food and other necessities (Brown, 1986).

Low Native Self-Esteem: The Myth of the 'Facts'

Generalizations

Overgeneralization is a mistake that is commonly made regarding native populations. To assume that findings specific to one native group can be generalized to all native peoples is both naive and dangerous. Significant differences exist within the native population depending on demographic and cultural circumstances. Edeburn and Gipp (1978) found that reservation students showed significantly higher school-related self concept scores than their urban counterparts. Despite having studied students from 22 public schools, Martin (1978) warns that his findings may not be generalizable beyond his particular state, and Lefley (1976) illustrated the limitations of generalizing between unequal native populations in a study of two groups of Florida Indians. The less acculturated group showed higher positive self-regard than the more acculturated.

The circumstances under which native Canadians learn are so varied that to consider the "native people" a single population is both inappropriate and extremely inaccurate. Some students attend schools that are now under "Band Control", where the education system is locally controlled and where there is often a much greater emphasis on maintaining native language and cultural traditions. Others, however, still attend provincial and federal school systems and are often bused into these "white" schools where they learn as part of a visible minority. Some native children do not speak English until they attend kindergarten, while it is the first - and sometimes only - language of others. A difficult learning environment can be created for the student who is learning English as a second language if - because of the school's commitment to provincial curriculum guidelines - he or she is required to use textbooks designed for a significantly higher reading level, and may cause a serious blow to his or her self-confidence and self-esteem (McGreevy 1984). It is not surprising then, that low self-esteem can be reinforced by the education process (Hathorn, 1971). Many native students have been raised on reserves which are often removed, if not isolated, from urban centres. Some children's only exposure to cities is while traveling on class trips, while others have been raised in nearby cities, towns or settlements. Grouped into the term "Native" are status Indians, non status Indians, Metis and Inuit - each distinct from the other. With these clarifications it is easier to see that even within a single tribe there are many different populations, not to mention that the cultures between tribes are also individually varied and distinct. There is not a single "native" population nor is there is not a single "native" culture.

Self-Esteem and Cultural Boundaries

Consideration of the self-esteem construct in relation to some native cultures begins with an immediate complication. Self-esteem is a positive attitude towards the self, associated with a sense of personal identity and worth. Many Indian cultures have traditionally emphasized the importance of collective identity over that of the individual, and the needs of the family, extended family and Band before self (Lafromboise and Boesch,1986). As well, consideration must be given to the possibility of variations in the antecedents and criteria of this construct since cultural boundaries are being crossed. In a cross-cultural exploration of the varying concepts of self-esteem, Wober (1971) found that wide differences in the criteria of self-esteem exist between both cultural and occupational groups.

Withycombe (1973) proposes that cultural differences must be considered in test interpretations. He suggests that the correlates of self-concept for white children cannot simply be expected to be the same for Indian children. Their self-concepts may be equally as high and simply correlated to other values. As well, a number of Coopersmith's indicators of low self-esteem (for example shyness, subdued speaking manner, refraining from expressing opinions) are approved behaviors in some Indian cultures (Lefley, 1975). The fact that the correlates of self-concept for Indian children may not exactly duplicate those for whites, does not establish that Indian self-concepts are lower. The value system must be taken into account.

Withycombe (1973) emphasizes the importance of cultural appropriateness in the constructs we attempt to measure. Constructs such as "popularity" which may be used as indicators of self-esteem, may be of little concern in some Indian cultures. Coopersmith (1967) outlines success as the most outstanding determinant of self-esteem. Cress and O'Donnell (1975) wanted to assess whether the criteria of measuring success - and thus of self-esteem - among Oglala Sioux adolescents differed from those emphasized by the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI). They found no significant correlations between the SEI and measures of success (including grade point average, teacher ratings and completion of the self-report inventory Thinking About Yourself.) The authors concluded that the traditional Sioux value system - based upon bravery, generosity, and individual autonomy - is sufficiently different from that of white Americans to invalidate the SEI as an appropriate measure of self-esteem for Oglala adolescents.

Inappropriateness of Measures

Lefley (1975) contests the validity of both the measurement instruments and their application when applied to native people. Standard self concept instruments may be heavily weighted for behaviors that are culturally inappropriate and self report on such items may bear little relationship to actual self-esteem levels. She proposes that if more culturally appropriate items were included in the instruments - such as "I am very cooperative" or "I can draw well" - that results may prove to be more accurate. Measuring self-perception in ethnic cultures is highly complex and there is a need for refining and norming instruments towards cultural appropriateness (Lefley, 1975).

Fuchs and Havighurst (1973) have argued against much of the research that exists regarding self concept and native people. The majority of these studies rely upon observation by non-Indians and on data collected using instruments with urban and white middle-class bias, with non-representative forced choice responses. Cultural differences between the Indian cultures and the white populations on which tests and inventories have been normed, are often so great as to render these scales of measurement inappropriate and inaccurate. Following a four-community study in Labrador, Bognar (1981) recommends caution in using the Tennessee Self Concept Scale (TSSC) with native persons because of very high True-False ratios indicating rigid response sets. Tempest (1985) also used the TSSC with a group of Navajo seventh and eighth graders and found that students needed additional interpretation of the items - "I often act like I am all thumbs; I am satisfied with my moral behavior" as these items were not self evident. In measuring the self concept levels of third and fourth grade native students in a northern Manitoba community Rampaul, Singh and Didyk (1984) discovered that not all items on the instrument (The Michigan State General Self-Concept of Ability Scale) could be used, and were limited to those items understood by the students.

Lefley (1974) studied the effects of a cultural heritage program on the self-concept of Miccosukee Indian children and argued strongly that the psychodynamics involved in self-concept change in minority children are far more complex than those anticipated in a simple experimental design. Her data point out that subtle and complex changes that may occur in self concept following a cultural intervention may not be readily apparent unless a variety of measuring instruments are used. Such changes may appear on some instruments and not on others. She claims there is a need for the development of sensitive, multi-dimensional, culturally appropriate instruments to measure these changes.

Research into the area of higher education among native Americans is still greatly needed and research into the subjective perceptions of native students may shed a great deal of necessary light on this subject (Huffman, Sill and Brokenleg, 1986).

Conclusion

The above discussion emphasizes a number of important considerations. The research in this area must be put into proper perspective. We must be aware of the inaccuracies of overgeneralization, the use of inappropriate measures, and the manner in which results are often distorted when insufficient consideration is given to cultural boundaries. As is often the case, raw data cannot stand alone. It must be properly interpreted, put into focus and explained. The facts, we might say, do not speak for themselves. At least not honestly.

As well, the majority of the research in this area does point to lower self-esteem levels for native youth, though the findings are by no means consistent or conclusive.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. General Overview

The choice of methodology must stem directly from the question, "Which method is most suited to this research?" Very early in the process of writing this thesis I discovered numerous claims that much of the research in the field of self-esteem and native people was questionable - because of the methodology.

Questions have been raised about the cultural appropriateness of some measurement instruments and claims have been made that because of cultural differences some measures are invalid for use with Natives (Bognar, 1981; Fuchs and Havighurst, 1973; Lefley, 1975; Tempest, 1985; Cress and O'Donnell, 1975; Withycombe, 1973). Because of this I wanted to consider the experience of the native people themselves, rather than bring to them an instrument that may carry a white, middle-class bias. Though there are inconsistencies, the literature does tend to demonstrate that native students have lower self-concepts and higher levels of depression. Why? Is it because they are Native? Are the measurement instruments perhaps culturally invalid? Have the rules of generalizability been breached? Is it because the education system has been unfair and inappropriate? Do native children experience an ongoing "cultural confusion"?

It is because these and other questions remain unanswered that I have chosen to research this area. I have chosen to do a qualitative study because I think the time has come to stop answering biased questions with biased answers, and to document the experience of the Indian people - rather than the interpretation of that experience. My aim in taking this approach was to take one step in a direction that would be valid, with the hope that any themes that might arise could later be integrated into culturally appropriate measures.

B. Subjects

Since my interest in doing this thesis is ultimately related to education, I initially considered looking at the experiences of children. For a number of reasons and after a great deal of consideration, however, I decided to focus my effort on adults.

After having taught native children for three years, I was aware of the amount of time and effort required to establish good, communicating rapport. I was somewhat hesitant because of the possibility of not attaining the level of trust necessary for the children to speak openly and honestly about personal matters involving their families and home life. As well, as mentioned above, native children have often felt ill-at-ease with unfamiliar white interviewers to a degree that seriously influenced their responses.

When I began speaking to native adults about my topic I realized there was a great wealth of knowledge and information that they were more than willing to share. The choice was clear. Interviews with adults regarding their childhood and youth experiences would most effectively meet the aims of this thesis. The adults were more at ease and more willing to share their thoughts and ideas. Adults speaking of their childhood experiences provided the ideal structure to meet the goal described at the beginning of this thesis: To take a first step in identifying the sources of self-esteem in native people.

The criteria used to choose my six subjects (three female and three male) were that they were native adults willing to openly discuss their childhood experiences. Thus these subjects are not representative - nor were intended to represent - any particular native population. Three are status Indians, three are Metis and ages range from 22 to 47.

C. Methodology

Three interviews were conducted with each subject, with the initial meeting being an introductory talk explaining my aims and methods. This was then followed by an audio-taped interview (approximately 60 to 90 minutes in length) which was then transcribed and printed. I reread these "protocols" and identified significant statements related directly to the topic and attempted to establish the meaning behind each statement. These lists of meanings were again read and reread, and then clustered into the related themes that began to emerge. When this was completed for each protocol, I then met again with each of the subjects to verify the accuracy of my findings and to see if any additional information could be offered. At this point each subject also completed Coopersmith's (1984) Self-Esteem Inventory. Once this verification was completed, I then clustered the themes together into group themes and have discussed the findings both on an individual and group basis.

This method is outlined by Paul F. Collaizzi (1978) and in brief includes the following stages.

1. Read all of the subject's descriptions;
2. Extract all "significant statements";
3. Identify the meaning of each of these statements;

4. List the meanings into "clusters of themes" and refer the clusters back to the original protocols to validate them;
5. Integrate this into a description of the topic; and
6. Return to each subject and validate the findings.

Criteria for Choosing Significant Statements

In choosing significant statements my goal was to allow the text - and my interaction with the subject - to determine which statements were identified. To this end I chose statements that as well as simply being mentioned by the subjects, were repeated and emphasized. This emphasis often took the form of strong, detailed descriptions, the repetition of key words and phrases, as well as the expression of emotion during the interview. On many occasions as my subjects revisited distant memories, strong emotions would once again stir and show themselves in moistened eyes and trembling voices.

In addition to these criteria, I also employed a sort of "bird's eye view" in the choice of my statements. This included a putting together of everything that I had experienced with my subjects - the interview, the emotions we had shared, the impressions I had perceived, and the emphasis and descriptions they provided. All these contributed to the identification of significant statements.

Methodology Examples

Since it would be impractical to include over 300 pages of interview transcripts in the thesis, I have included a sample to demonstrate the process

I employed. Stage 1 begins with a number of excerpts from the interview with Patricia and is followed by examples of each of the five remaining stages.

Stage 1: Read all of the subject's descriptions

Excerpt 1.

Patricia: "So here I am in class and one of the girls in class got up and started reading my father's sentence - 'cause it was in the newspaper. And then I didn't want to go back to school after that. And that's when I think I started having problems in school in grade 5, so it sort of led to grade 7 and I started to get into trouble when I was in grade 7. When I was in grade 7 I was fighting with students, because I had to prove that I was, you know, tough.

Jim: "That would be a critical time?"

Patricia: "Uh-huh. You know, it's just something I can't put out of my memory - I constantly think about it - not constantly, but I always go back to it. You know, that was like a turning point. You know, here I had a whole lot to deal with and then - I mean I'm sure all the students knew about my father being in jail, but it was the broadcast in school, because (our town) is a very small town and everyone knew everything that was going on, so it was a very difficult time. And then - some other low points - oh, I've had a lot like going into Junior High School. That's why I just sort of grew up fast, 'cause I knew - I knew that I was going to marry an American, and people would say, "Well, how did you know that?" And well, when I was l3 years old, I made a conscious decision that I was going to marry an American and I used to pray on it, I used to think about it - I was obsessed by it and what did I do? Why did I want to marry an American? So I could move away from this town. So we did. We actually moved to the States. That's what I wanted to do. I wanted to meet someone and move away, far away.

Jim: "So what grade would you be in when this began?"

Patricia: "Seven."

Jim: "Was this during your rebelling stage?"

Patricia: "Yeah. Like I said, 'If I do anything in this life it is to get away from this family that I totally disrespect and, you know, and get away from this town which I totally can't stand. So I made a conscious decision and I did it."

Jim: "So grade 4 started going well. It was in grade 5 this girl read the article about your father and you said that things started to turn into a low period and you didn't want to go to school. Do you think that was the turning point that really affected you and resulted in a far more negative attitude toward school?"

Patricia: "Oh yeah. Lots of shame, because grade 5 and grade 6, you know, within those two years - I remember I was going through a lot of others things too - I was just talking about this last week. I used to go to school - like we lived about 2 miles from the school and we used to walk to school and I used to walk down back alleys to get to school."

Jim: "Is that because of your dad being in jail?"

Patricia: "Uh huh. Like I had no confidence at all at that particular time. I don't know what kept me going - I can't really think what kept me going. It was a very awkward time. And not going around with a father . . ."

Jim: "Can you tell me about that. Was your father going to jail way back when you were just an infant?"

Patricia: "Like when we lived back in the log cabin, he was going to jail at that time. Like he went to jail quite a few times, but I mean his crimes are rape, so here's this man who has committed rape and he's done it about four or five times, you know, he has a real problem with it. I mean, if the crime was anything less than that, I mean, I am sure even more acceptable than . . .

Jim: "It would have made it easier."

Patricia: "Yeah. Easier for me to handle, yeah, than having a father who is a rapist on top of it."

Jim: "So you grew up and your mom was taking care of the six of you and your dad was away in jail?"

Patricia: "Uh-huh, living on welfare."

Jim: "Yeah that would be a tough one."

Patricia: "Yeah it was tough on her too. It was tough on everyone and when he used to come he used to just beat everyone up. It was his way of dealing with his anger - expressing his anger. Not me. He never ever did beat me, but he beat my younger brother really bad. Throw him down the steps. My brother had this problem of wetting the bed. My father used to, you know, get up in the middle of the night to see if he wet the bed and if he did, he would punch him out. Things like that. And he beat my older sister up too until she started asserting herself in a physical manner - started hitting him over the head with frying pans - I mean it was a very violent home. Like I spent a lot of time underneath the bed."

Excerpt 2.

Patricia: "Yeah, I was very shy. I remember that. Very shy. I remember this thing where we had to, in grade one, put our hands onto the desk. We had a nun - I was going to St. Mary's at that time - I changed schools so many times. That was really hard. But I remember her coming up to us and she had this ruler in her hand - yardstick, and she would look to see if your nails were clean. And if they weren't she would crack you on them. I remember that happening to me and being sent home to clean my nails. That's significant. Just sort of being ostracized. But you know, being Native. I remember getting into a fight when I was in grade one."

Jim: "Because you were Native?"

Patricia: "Yeah. I remember hitting this girl. I remember going to the classroom and getting into the office and getting lectured by Mr. Jones the principal. I was defending myself. It was one of the richest girls in school at the time - from a very wealthy family. And like I said, I wasn't able to play with the children in school. Like I could play with our kind, but I couldn't play with the others.

Stage 2: Extract the significant statements

"It's just something I can't put out of my memory (the humiliation by other students because of her father's rape conviction) - I constantly think about it - not constantly, but I always go back to it. I made a conscious decision I wanted to marry an American. I became obsessed with it. I wanted to meet someone and move away, far away."

"If I do anything in this life it is to get away from this family that I totally disrespect and away from this town which I totally can't stand."

"Oh yeah. Lot's of shame. I used to go to school - like we lived about two miles from the school - and I used to walk down back alleys to get to school."

"When he (father) used to come he used to beat every one up. I mean it was a very violent home. Like I spent a lot of time underneath the bed."

"I remember being sent home to clean my nails. That's significant. Just sort of being ostracized."

"I wasn't able to play with the children in school. Like I could only play with our kind (Natives) but I couldn't play with the others.

Stage 3: Identify the meaning of each of these statements

The shame she felt over her father's rape convictions, and her sense of isolation and alienation were so great that she became obsessed with marrying someone who would take her away - from her family, her school and her town.

She lived in a very frightening, violent environment at home and a humiliating, cold one at school.

She struggled with being ostracized and rejected because of race right from her earliest school days. This racism was experienced with teachers as well as with students.

Stage 4: List the meanings into clusters of themes

Every theme that emerged was identified and compared with those of the other subjects. The example table below identifies some of the various negative themes that were significant influences on the lives of the subjects.

Negative Themes

Themes listed here represent significant negative experiences.

Y = YES it was a significantly negative influence
N = The opposite was mentioned
- = Not mentioned

Family	Donna	Linda	Patricia	Lester	Lou	Mike
Father's influence	N	Y	Y	Y	-	-
Alcoholic Father	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-
Raised in Poverty	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-
Major Violence in the Home (beatings)	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-

Stage 5: Integrate this into a description of the topic

Poverty and Violence: The Need to Escape.

Patricia's childhood poverty and family violence were such powerful influences on her life that she became obsessed with getting away. Her father had committed rape numerous times - and had been convicted - and the had committed rape numerous times - and had been convicted - and the weight of the shame she had to bear was so overwhelming that she'd avoid people by walking down back alleys in order to get to school. She was humiliated by other students because of her father and this led to withdrawal and isolation. Her family was on welfare and the poverty led to additional isolation.

"Trashy Native Family".

Her already suffering sense of self-esteem took an additional blow when, in elementary school, she discovered that other children weren't allowed to play with her because she was native. She was rejected because she was from a "trashy native family" and only allowed to play with her "own kind". At school she found herself in a cold, humiliating environment and she struggled with racist rejection from the moment she entered grade one. Even some of her teachers ostracized her, and she grew up with the impression that "Natives are dirt."

Stage 6: Return to each subject and validate the findings

Verifications of the descriptions were made by each of the subjects in a subsequent meeting, and any additional information and comments were integrated into the results.

IV. RESULTS

A. Introduction

This chapter contains three main sections, all of which stem directly from the process of the thematic analysis: The individual subject profiles, the thematic analysis listings, and the theme tables. Before describing these areas I will briefly explain the purpose and scope of each.

The Subject Profiles

A profile of each subject has been created as the final step in the thematic analysis. The profiles were created to make the information more manageable, and to add a dimension of accessibility to the groups of themes that emerged. No details or characteristics were added that did not present themselves in the original protocols, though only those themes that were major influences are included in this section.

The Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis lists all the themes that have emerged and categorizes them according their positive or negative influence. Each theme begins with a broad category (i.e. family and extended family), and is then followed by sub-categories (i.e. mother). Each of these is then followed by details from the subjects' life histories.

Theme Tables

The themes are also presented in a table format.

B. The Subject Profiles

1. Patricia

Poverty and Violence: The Need to Escape

Patricia's childhood poverty and family violence were such powerful influences on her life that she became obsessed with getting away. Her father had committed rape numerous times -and had been convicted - and the weight of the shame she had to bear was so overwhelming that she would avoid people by walking down back alleys in order to get to school. She was humiliated by other students because of her father and this led to withdrawal and isolation. Her family was on welfare and the poverty led to additional isolation.

"Trashy Native Family"

Her already suffering sense of self-esteem took an additional blow when, in elementary school, she discovered that other children weren't allowed to play with her because she was Indian. She was rejected because she was from a "trashy native family" and only allowed to play with her "own kind". At school she found herself in a cold, humiliating environment and she struggled with racist rejection from the moment she entered grade one. Even some of her teachers ostracized her, and she grew up with the impression that "Natives are dirt."

Grandfather: A Holy Man

Fortunately there were some early positives in Patricia's life. She remembers her grandfather as a "holy man" and she was special to him. They'd spend time in the fields collecting herbs and making special teas or just doing errands together, and when she was sick, he'd come to take care of her.

Little Support at Home

Her mother was also a positive, loving influence, but unfortunately her efforts to provide and care for the family often left her exhausted. Though she had a number of uncles who were also good influences, the remainder of the extended family was not very positive. There were many children at home, but it wasn't a very supportive environment.

One Encouraging Teacher

Despite all this madness, Patricia remembers with fondness the positive effect of one particular elementary school teacher who cared for her and involved her in a school dance program. The success, acceptance and attention of that year (grade 4), made her feel important and good about herself.

Support: A Long Time Coming

The attention and affection she received from two uncles and from a group of nuns at a nearby convent, compensated - though only somewhat - for the fact that she had almost no peer support either at home or at school. Not until she reached the age of sixteen did she have someone in her life that she could "really talk to."

Major Positive Influences

-relationship with grandfather

-influence of mother

-one elementary school teacher

Major Negative Influences

-severe racism - that led to rejection and isolation

-poverty - that led to additional isolation

-cold, humiliating school environment - resulting from racism, poverty, and the shame from her father's rape conviction

-poor support system

2. Donna

Extended Family: Accepting and Supportive

Donna had a very good and consistent early home life and a very supportive extended family including the many cousins who were her childhood friends. This group was supportive and very accepting and rarely was anyone ever ridiculed. They were allowed a good deal of freedom by their parents and when they were done their chores they would go off by themselves and do whatever they wanted to do. Having this extended family support was a very positive influence and Donna came out of childhood liking herself.

Tragedies at a Distance

Her mother was an important force in the development of high standards and a good value system. Although Donna saw other children neglected and left hungry, and saw other parents drinking huge amounts, she didn't experience any of that. Food was always on the table and supper was there on time. Though she saw tragedies around her with some of the other families in the settlement, there was no neglect or alcoholism in her own home. A good deal of yelling went on in the house - but there was no physical abuse.

Positive School-Life

School - which was valued by both parents - was a positive influence and she recalls the lasting effect that a number of encouraging teachers had on her. A couple of teachers spent extra time doing "neat things" with Donna and her sisters. They made her feel special.

Even her exposure to white society and to the white students in the city school - after moving there in grade five - was also seen as positive.

Major Positive Influences

-good healthy family upbringing

-strong, supportive extended family

-positive attitudes of parents towards education

-strong maternal influence in development of high standards and good value system

-positive school experience

Major Negative Influences

-none

3. Linda

Early Childhood Treasures

As I read through Linda's themes I couldn't help but think of what potential she had had for a high degree of significance in her youth. She spent many wonderful hours with her grandmother who taught her much about traditional life. She learned herb hunting and berry picking, as well as all the magical bits of wisdom that were passed on in those treasured moments together. Her mother was a strong and positive influence. She taught without harsh, physical discipline and promoted a sense of independence by not overly sheltering them. Her home reserve was friendly, like a big family, and if you discovered you had run out of bread you could run next door and borrow a loaf from the neighbors. The time spent with her real father, heading off to a cabin by the lakeside to spend some time fishing, were marvelous moments to remember.

The Need to Escape

Unfortunately there was a negative influence as well, and it was strong enough to overshadow - if not destroy - much of the positive. Linda's stepfather was an alcoholic and he was extremely violent. He wasn't around much because he was often away hunting - or in jail. When he was home, however, he drank and was physically and emotionally abusive. Ridiculing comments about his drunkenness and violence seeped their way into the classroom and Linda often bore the shame of her stepfather's ways. The other children laughed and made teasing remarks. That was only the tip of the problem, however, for there was much more to fear at home. After years of this abuse, her mother finally had had enough and when the stepfather was away they packed their bags and ran. They moved to the strange and unwelcoming surroundings of the city. Escaping one problem unfortunately led to the creation of others. They discovered two new terrors that would haunt them for years and years to come: Racism and poverty.

New Problems in the City

Without question, Linda's move from the reserve to the city seriously influenced her sense of significance, but her stepfather was only the indirect cause of the new problems they experienced. Neither the city itself nor the school system provided even the slightest sense of belonging or support.

Linda was in grade five when they fled from the reserve and the shock of the move was traumatic. She and her brothers attended a white school where they were the only native children. The experience was overwhelming. From the very beginning they were physically threatened and laughed at because they were native. Her family had been uprooted from an environment where they rarely saw a white person and moved into another where they were surrounded by them. The whites were unfriendly and extremely unwelcoming. She was unaccepted - and actually rejected - on a daily basis. Day in and day out. She had no friends, felt constantly frightened and lonely, and survived by becoming a "loner" and sticking to herself.

A Positive Glimmer

Although she did experience some racism from a number of city teachers, there were others who were very positive. A couple of them cared for her and helped motivate her. They helped her begin to break out of the negative cycle she was in. Their encouragement led to a seed of motivation which in turn led to higher grades, and the classroom successes led to her feeling better about herself. Although this was by no means sufficient to undo all the negatives she'd experienced since arriving, the influence of these teachers was powerful and is remembered to this day.

Looking Back Years Later

Although it resulted in years of difficulty, her movement away from the reserve was not completely negative, nor was the life on the reserve -which she'd left behind - completely positive. As a young adult she returned to the reserve and saw that some of her friends had dropped out of school or gotten pregnant. This affected her deeply and forced her reflect on what she wanted to do with her life. Adjusting to the city was unquestionably difficult - especially during her elementary years - but the exposure to the "outside world" and to seeing working professionals later gave her a valuable perspective and motivated her to "do something" with her life.

Major Positive Influences

-relationship with grandmother (up to grade five)
-relationship with mother
-good support system on the reserve (up to grade five)
-positive influence of real father

-positive, encouraging teachers
-exposure to the "outside world"

Major Negative Influences

-violent, alcoholic stepfather
-abusive racism
-move to the city where they experienced racism and poverty
  -cold, negative school environment (after moving to the city)

4. Lester

Childhood Horror

With vivid memories that brought tears to his eyes, Lester recalled the terror of childhood violence that ended in his witnessing - at five years of age - the murder of his mother. He saw his stepfather pull the trigger and heard his mother cry out. She fell back on the bed and Lester walked in and looked down at her in shock, knowing that she was dead. His stepfather broke the gun in half and said, "Your mother just shot herself!" This was the horrible culmination of the beatings he had so often witnessed.

Residential School: The Horror Continues

Lester began his education during the period when residential schools were still common and his experiences there were often horrific. The school, which required that he leave his home reserve for ten months of the year, was extremely rigid and resulted in very negative educational experiences - which Lester considers worse than a military detention camp he once spent time in.

It was an abusive and punishing environment. The students had their pockets sewn up (so they wouldn't touch their genitals), were made to play in sub-zero temperatures without mitts, were regularly given beatings, and once - because he swore at a nun - Lester was made to stand in the same spot, without food or water for two full days and nights. He was not allowed to leave to go to the washroom and urinated onto himself numerous times. The children were often told that they were "going to grow up and be drunken bums just like their fathers". Many, claims Lester, lived up to the negative stereotypes.

Success Means Survival

Success for him often meant survival of the horrible times. He found success by surviving the two day ordeal of standing in one spot, and he survived residential school itself. He adjusted to the negative environment by lowering his expectations. "I guess I just didn't expect too much. . ." Two encouraging sisters (nuns) were a good influence on him and used to praise him and tell him that he had a lot of potential. Despite the abuse of the residential school he managed to achieve good grades.

Scattered Support System

Lester did have some degree of positive influence during his childhood. After the death of his mother he went to live with his older brother and though they lived in poverty - and the brother would sometimes come home drunk - there was never any violence. He also lived for a time with his real father who never physically abused him. Lester also had a close friend at the time, whom he considered a brother and who was the most influential person in his life.

Lester was exposed to alcohol at a very young age and his grandmother used to drink as well. If she was having a part when he visited her, he'd sneak bottles of beer out the window to a friend and they'd sell them on Sunday morning. He was seven years of age.

Grandmother: Times of Refuge

Staying with his grandmother was like having a place of refuge. She taught him traditional skills, like snaring rabbits, and she was an excellent shot. Despite his playing tricks on her - like putting a firecracker in her cigarette - she was completely accepting of him and was never punishing. She was a strong influence because of her unconditional acceptance.

Major Positive Influences

-a close friend who was like a brother

-time spent with his grandmother

-two teachers ("sisters" at the Catholic residential school)

Major Negative Influences

-extremely violent home life (though he himself was not often beaten)

-childhood trauma - witnessed the killing of his mother

-punishing, abusive school environment

5. Lou

Mother and Grandfather: Powerful Influences

Lou received a lot of encouragement and enthusiasm from his mother - especially regarding education. He had a very close relationship with her and she was very important to him. As well this same sense of encouragement and enthusiasm came from his grandfather, who was available for discussions of major life decisions. He was supportive of education, encouraged hard work and was the most positive influence in Lou's life.

Because of the times they spent together, Lou develop a very strong sense of pride in being Native. The experience with his grandfather is deeply ingrained and still active within him today. He felt good about himself because of his grandfather.

The Positive Effects of School

Unlike his older brothers and sisters - who went to residential school - Lou's experience of school was very positive. He was encouraged by both mother and grandfather, and did not feel culturally severed as did his brothers and sisters. Residential school had a detrimental effect on his older siblings which was demonstrated in their not having ever "done anything for themselves". They seemed to lose their connection to the family unit. It was as though they had been destroyed or distorted.

Schooling, however, changed for him. There were no more residential schools. Local people became involved in the school day. Lessons were culturally relevant and there seemed to be at least some degree of respect for the native culture. Support was also received at home to work hard.

Positive Attitudes Towards Education

Education was highly valued by his mother and grandfather and he received encouragement to take advantage of it.

Racist Remarks had Little Effect

The strong sense of pride - instilled in him primarily by his grandfather - enabled him to be called "Indian" names (like Cherokee and Running Bear) without being hurt by them.

Caught Between Two Worlds

Lou married a young white girl and at times felt caught between two worlds. At times he felt "looked down upon" by his new white in-laws - but this attitude changed as he became increasingly successful in his career. Unfortunately this same success resulted in alienation from his own family who started viewing him as a "whiteman's Indian".

Major Positive Influences

-relationship with grandfather

-relationship with mother

-strong support system/extended family

Major Negative Influences

-none

6. Mike

Grandmother and Grandfather: Extremely Positive Influences

Mike spent a good deal of time with his grandparents and recalls these times as "great". They taught him many traditional skills - like snaring rabbits - and disciplined in a warm, humble manner. His grandfather was also his teacher and many times they sat for hours and talked over a pot of tea. They were extremely positive influences. His time spent with them was cherished, and it was very positive and a time of development. He learned lessons, laughed and enjoyed himself. It was a very powerful experience, the effects of which still influence him in his daily attitudes and behavior to this day.

Extended Family: Constantly Together

Mike grew up with a tremendous support system and a real feeling of closeness in the reserve community. Someone would kill a moose and two or three families would share. There was a lot of socializing, visiting and sharing within the immediate and extended family, and for nearly fifteen years they were constantly together.

Two Special Teachers

One particular teacher had a significant effect on Mike because of his encouragement and kindness. Mike received the gift of a pair of shoes from this man, and that expression of caring has become a treasured memory. The kindnesses of another teacher who spent time with Mike and his classmates at an outdoor camp, were also a very positive influence, and are remembered with fondness.

Residential School with a Twist

Mike's experience of Residential School was very positive - perhaps because he attended just prior to their being phased out and they were much less severe in comparison to the earlier days (when Lester had attended). School instilled a sense of discipline and spirituality.

Response to the Tragedies

Seeing alcoholism around him as he was growing up made Mike vow not to let it happen to him.

Exposure to the White World: Tough but Good

Exposure to the "white world" at age sixteen was a difficult adjustment but is now viewed as positive. The school was intimidating but the struggle forced him to make plans and set goals and to look for his identity. The positive influences in his life - including the positive teachers - gave him the strength to carry on.

Major Positive Influences

-relationship with grandmother and grandfather

-support system of extended family

-two encouraging, caring teachers

Major Negative Influences

-none

C. Thematic Analysis

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the thematic analysis lists all the themes that have emerged and categorizes them according to their positive or negative influence. Each theme begins with a broad category (i.e. family and extended family), and is then followed by sub-categories (i.e. mother). Each of these is then followed by details from the subjects' life histories.

1a. Patricia: Positive Themes

Family and Extended Family

Mother.

Her mother was "such a good person".

Pre-grade one self-esteem was higher. Her mother was a positive, loving influence, though because she "did everything" for the family, was usually exhausted.

Grandfather.

Her grandfather was a very positive influence. He was a "wonderful influence" and a "holy man". They spent time going out to the fields and collecting herbs and making special tea or just going to the store. And there were times when she was sick and he would come and take care of her. She was special to him.

Large, supportive Extended Family.

There were many children around though it wasn't a very supportive environment.

Other Extended Family (Uncles, Cousins).

She also had two uncles who spent time with her and were a positive influence in her life.

Significant Impact of Others Outside Family

At an early age, she was influenced by religious people (nuns at a nearby convent) in a very positive way.

Education

Significant Impact of Others Outside Family.

Felt accepted and cared for by one particular elementary school teacher. She felt that she was one of the favorite students of this teacher. This teacher accepted her into the grade 4 dance group that performed on television and it was an extremely proud and significant time for her. The dance group and being on television was a real boost of feeling accepted and important in the midst of great deal of aloneness, sadness, rejection and racism. The success, acceptance and attention of this year resulted in her feeling good about herself as well as feeling important.

Positive Education Experiences.

After graduating from college and establishing a career and having money to spend, she began to have the feeling that finally there were some positive things in her life.

Her successes began to change her self concept in terms of competence and ability. Education really boosted her self-esteem.

Completion of High School Education.

Completing the grade 12 equivalency gave her a sense of accomplishment and other doors opened to her. It was a major success.

Returning to Education (after dropping out).

Return to school (grade 10 -12) after dropping out was very positive. After dropping out of school and working as a waitress, the feeling of being stuck and going nowhere was depressing her.

Returning to get an education was a positive experience. Taking a college course in college communications was a turning point. Success at college enhanced her sense of self-esteem. She began to see herself as competent. She has a much more positive self concept and sense of self worth now. Self-esteem now is at a good, positive level.

Culture

Exposure to Traditional Skills.

Yes. This is discussed under the "Grandfather" sub-heading above.

Developed Strong Sense of Nativeness.

Didn't have a sense of Indian culture in the home. Her family didn't - and still doesn't - accept being Native. She grew up with the impression - because of the all the abusive racism she encountered - that "Natives are dirt". She later reached a point in adult life where nativeness became something positive.

Other

Personal Therapy.

Going for personal therapy was a very positive influence in her life.

Impression that parent "Believed in me".

Her mother had a "positive feeling" about her and was always confident that she would go somewhere. This vote of confidence from one person was all she needed. Because of this she is now aware of the influence she can have on others.

Felt "special" as a child.

Despite her low self concept she did feel that in some ways she was treated as a special child - even by her father. There was jealousy from her siblings because of her special treatment.

1b. Patricia: Negative Themes

Family

Father's influence.

Her childhood and family (poverty and violence) were such negatives that she was obsessed with getting away.

Her father committed rape four or five times. The weight and shame of having a father who was a rapist was very difficult to bear.

Her shame was so great that she used to walk down back alleys to get to school. During this period she was very insecure and ill at ease (especially in grades 5 - 7).

Alcoholic Father.

Her brother and sister who were most affected by father's violence and alcoholism are "messed up" and alcoholics themselves.

Raised in Poverty.

She was raised in poverty.

Her family was raised on welfare by her mother.

Because of the extreme violence and poverty in her family she wanted to get away from them.

Her childhood poverty left her with a great fear of being poor and she made a vow not to be poor herself.

Poverty led to additional isolation.

Her own daughter (now back in the same school) doesn't have to deal with the same issues because she isn't suffering the effects of poverty (as in the clothes she wears). Money, a sense of parental discipline and positive role models are some of the differences between her own childhood and that of her daughter.

Her childhood poverty was so strong that she still isn't over it and still to some degree equates money with self-esteem.

Major Violence in the Home (beatings).

Her father was in jail a great deal of the time and when he was home he was usually only violent to the other members of the family, and not to Patricia. She was beaten only one time by her father and he used a stick with nails in it. Her mother reacted by stabbing the step-father who was then taken to hospital.

It was a very frightening, violent home environment.

Suffered Severe Emotional Trauma as Child.

She was humiliated by other students because of father's background (he was convicted of rape and sentenced to prison) and it led to a near complete sense of isolation and withdrawal. She had no desire to go to school (between grades 5 and 8) and this led to additional problems of "getting into trouble" at school.

When a classmate read aloud her father's sentence (a clipping from the newspaper) it was a critical point for her, resulting in extreme humiliation and a sense of isolation and alienation so great that she became nearly obsessed with marrying someone who would "take her far, far away". This happened in grade 5 - the year following her time of success and acceptance. A couple of real "low" years followed this humiliation. The shame lasted a long, long time.

There was also a build-up of hatred over the years.

Early Environment.

Self-esteem level was very low in grade one. She had a very poor self concept coming out of childhood, even regarding her looks. This was also related to poverty because they didn't have "nice" clothes and running water.

Lack of Strong Support System.

Had no one to talk to through this long period of isolation. Even her mother was too exhausted because of raising a large family.

She didn't have her first real friend (to whom she could " really talk" to) until she was 16 years old. She was also able to talk to her husband (whom she married when 16) who gave her a sense of unconditional acceptance - which she felt for the first time in her life.

Education

Negative Education Experiences.

It was often a humiliating, cold environment at school.

She struggled with being rejected because of race right from grade one. She was isolated and not able to play with the other kids in the school. Could only play with her "own kind". Even the teachers ostracized her at times.

Negative Attitude of Parents toward School.

Education hadn't been an important factor in her mother's life and so the children weren't really encouraged to continue.

Culture

Racism - Experienced a Great Deal.

Discovered in early elementary school that other kids weren't allowed to play with her because she was Indian, and this was very hard on her.

Felt rejected by other children because she was from a "trashy native family". She spent a lot of time alone and in tears, because other children weren't allowed to play with her.

Didn't Have Strong Sense of Nativeness as Child.

Didn't have a sense of Indian culture in the home. Her family didn't - and still doesn't - accept being Native. She grew up with the impression - because of the all the abusive racism she encountered - that "Natives are dirt".

She later reached a point in adult life where nativeness became something positive.

Other

Married at Very Young Age.

Getting married at such a young age (16) was a negative experience because it eventually held her back and she began to feel trapped. She rebelled against him - and reacted to him as though he were her father - when she was 19.

Lack of Positive Role Models.

She had no real positive role models as a child and said that she had "no sense of discipline".

2a. Donna: Positive Themes

Family and Extended Family

Mother.

Her mother was an important force in the development of high standards and a good value system. Although she saw other kids neglected and left hungry and saw other parents drinking huge amounts, she didn't experience it. Food was always on the table and supper was there on time.

Father.

Although her father did have a drinking problem though it wasn't very serious and never to the point of neglect. He would get drunk once a month or so and only for a day.

Large Supportive Extended Family.

Had an excellent support system which involved the cousins (and aunts and uncles) from four families. It was like one big family.

They (Donna and her cousins) were very independent in terms of their time. When they were done their chores they would go off by themselves and do whatever they wanted to. Parents allowed the children a lot of freedom without supervision.

The extended family support system was very accepting and rarely was anyone ever ridiculed.

Had a very good sense of self when starting school. Having the extended family support around was a very positive influence. She came out of childhood liking herself.

Other Extended Family (Uncles, Cousins).

Had a good role model in an older cousin who went to university.

Education

Significant Impact of Others Outside Family.

The teachers also had a positive impact on her. Because of her brightness, she excelled and the teacher had her help because she was way ahead, and this made her feel special. School was a positive influence on her.

A couple of teachers were very positive influences by spending extra time and doing "neat things" with her and her sisters.

Positive Education Experiences.

Moving to different schools was a good experience as it provided her with different exposure. Exposure to white students and white school was a positive experience.

Exposure to White Schools.

Moving to different schools was a good experience as it provided her with different exposure. Exposure to white students and white school was a positive experience.

Complete of High School Education.

Yes

Positive Parental Attitude Towards Education.

Parents valued school and valued education.

Positive from the Negative

Community Violence and Tragedies.

Seeing violence in the community led to not wanting to be exposed to it.

Moving Away From Reserve/Community to attend school.

Moving to different schools was a good experience as it provided her with different exposure. Exposure to white students and white school was a positive experience.

2b. Donna: Negative Themes

Family

Family Discipline.

Her own household had a lot of yelling, (but no physical abuse.) She didn't like the screaming from her mother.

There was no violence in the family. There was rarely any physical discipline and the two times she was hit, she felt strong enough in herself to rebel and she left and went and stayed elsewhere.

Education

Negative Education Experiences.

Excelling in school was a negative experience in she was younger than her classmates.

Commuting (nearly two hours a day) by bus was a negative experience

Culture

Racism - Experienced Some.

Didn't experience much discrimination. The little bit she did experience (being called "half-breed" in grade 10, was a very negative experience)

Even though her family identified with the Indian culture, she experienced some degree of "lack of acceptance" from the reserve Indian people. "You're not Indian. You're Metis!" Went through a period of feeling stuck in the middle.

3a. Linda: Positive Themes

Family and Extended Family

Mother.

Her mother was a strong, positive influence through her difficult and lonely times of trying to adjust to life in white city schools.

Her mother taught her a sense of independence and didn't overly shelter them. She was a good role model and neither drank nor smoked.

Father.

Her real father was a positive influence on her. (She never lived with him, however. She lived with her mother and stepfather). He'd come to visit occasionally and bring her a present and take her fishing and they'd stay in a log cabin in the bush and cook fish over an open fire. He and her mother were never married. Though he didn't spend a great deal of time with her, she had the sense that he really cared for her and she did for him.

Grandfather.

Grandfather was a very positive influence.

Grandmother.

Grandmother was a very positive influence on her. Her grandmother taught her traditional skills like herb hunting and berry picking.

Close-Knit, Friendly Community.

The reserve was close and friendly, like a big family. You could run next door and borrow a loaf of bread.

The smaller communities (she lived briefly in two smaller cities in Alberta as well as living in Edmonton) offered her native friends and less of a sense of aloneness than the larger community.

Education

Significant Impact of Others Outside Family.

Some white teachers were a positive influence and they used to invite the children over to their place to play games and make taffy.

During her difficult times of adjusting to new schools, her teachers were a positive influence and cared for her.

The impact of a couple of positive , encouraging teachers led to motivation and higher grades and this led to feeling better about herself.

Positive Education Experiences.

Quitting college left her with a sense of failure but she was aware that she needed to get out of that "rut". Her accomplishments resulted in boosts to her confidence which in turn contributed to more accomplishments. Each time she achieved something she felt a lot better about herself.

Despite horrendous odds against her in her early school years a couple of encouraging teachers influenced her to work hard and to "bring up" her marks. The encouragement gave her hope. The hope gave her motivation. The motivation gave her higher grades and the higher grades gave her confidence and she began feeling much better about herself.

Completion of High School Education.

The sense of achievement that came with receiving her grade 12 diploma was very positive.

Positive Parental Attitude Towards Education.

Both mother and aunt had positive attitudes towards education. Mother promoted the idea that education comes first.

Culture

Exposure to Traditional Skills.

Spent her summers hunting and fishing with her family. Traveled with her father - because she was the oldest - and was taught traditional skills like setting up snares and checking paths. She knew how to skin rabbits and how to cook ducks and make traditional foods.

Exposure to Nature.

Nature was a satisfying, revealing influence. Moving to the city (at age 10) was a movement away from traditional lifestyle.

Staying in the bush - away from the city and "white" influence - was a positive experience.

Positive from the Negative

Community Violence and Tragedies.

Returning to the reserve after years away in the city and seeing her friends - some were pregnant or had dropped out of school - had a negative effect on her. This made her reflect on what she wanted to do with her life.

Moving Away From Reserve/Community to Attend School.

Adjusting to the city was difficult.

The exposure to the outside world - to seeing working professionals - gave her a perspective when she returned and saw her friends dropping out of school. She wanted to do something with her life.

She believes that you need more exposure than just "bush life."

Other

Motivated from Responsibility of Being Oldest Child.

As the oldest in the family she felt responsibility as a role model, and that motivated her to work.

3b. Linda: Negative Themes

Family

Father's influence.

Her step-father was rarely around. He was often away hunting or in jail and so she was raised mainly by her mother. Her mother wasn't a strict disciplinarian and wasn't violent. Step father had an alcohol problem and would get violent when drinking. When he was home he was a very negative influence because of his violence and his drinking. The step father brought shame on the family and it worked its way into the school classroom. They left the reserve because her mother wanted to leave the step father. He bothered them in Fort McMurray and they eventually had to leave there as well.

Alcoholic Father.

See "Father's Influence" above.

Raised in Poverty

Their family was poor and she felt uncomfortable with some of her more well-off relatives because of her own poverty.

Major Violence in the Home (beatings)

Yes. See "Father's Influence" above

Suffered Severe Emotional Trauma as Child

Grade five was a shock because they had left their reserve and traveled to Fort McMurray. She and her brothers and sisters attended a white school and were the only native children. From the very beginning they were bothered by other students who wanted to "beat them up". Others would laugh at them because they were Native and she felt frightened and lonely. Being around so many whites was a difficult, traumatic experience.

Coming to Edmonton was a real culture shock and she and her brothers and sisters couldn't believe most of what they saw. The larger centres, both Fort McMurray and Edmonton, resulted in contact with prejudice and a sense of alienation. There was even a sense of prejudice from some of the teachers.

The prejudice and physical threats resulted in strong feelings of loneliness and alienation, as well as poor academic achievement, poor attendance and low motivation.

Also experienced prejudice from the neighbors. All the negative experience with whites started a build-up of resentment and hatred. Even the one native family she did meet while adjusting to life in the Edmonton school, were urban Indians and they had little in common.

The city schools, because of a lack of friends, resulted in her "sticking to herself" more.

Education

Negative Education Experiences

She stayed in the mission school for a short time. She didn't like it because it was very strict and orderly and had so many rules. They had to sleep with their hands folded in prayer and the nuns would sometimes come and check them in the middle of the night and wake them up if they weren't.

Moving to the city resulted in loss of Cree language.

Culture

Racism - Experienced a Great Deal.

Experienced a great deal. This is discussed in the "Suffered Severe Emotional Trauma as Child" category above.

Other

She had responsibilities at very early age (grade 3) of taking care of the younger children.

4a. Lester: Positive Themes

Family and Extended Family

Grandmother.

His grandmother was very influential on him. Staying with her was like having a place of refuge. She taught him traditional skills, like snaring rabbits, and she was an excellent shot and a very experienced hunter. Despite his playing tricks on her (like putting a firecracker in her cigarette) she was completely accepting of him and was never punishing. She was a strong influence because of unconditional acceptance. She never abused him physically.

Other Extended Family (Uncles, Cousins).

His older brother - who he went to stay with after his mother was killed - was a good influence. He would take him fishing. There was often little to eat and the brother would sometimes come home drunk but he was never violent.

He had a very close friend (who was considered a brother) who was a good support through all the hardship of residential school.

This friend was the most influential person in his life.

Education

Significant Impact of Others Outside Family.

Two encouraging sisters (nuns) were a good influence on him. One especially used to praise him a lot and told him he had a lot of potential.

Positive Education Experiences.

Surviving the negative, abusive environment of residential school resulted in a boost to his confidence.

Achieved Good Grades.

Despite an extremely difficult educational environment, good grades were achieved.

Culture

Exposure to Traditional Skills.

He was exposed to traditional skills though they were not mentioned as a major positive influence.

Exposure to Nature.

His closeness to nature was an extremely positive experience that he loved.

4b. Lester: Negative Themes

Family

Alcoholic Father (Stepfather).

He was exposed to alcohol at a very young age and his grandmother used to drink as well. If she was having a party when he visited her he'd sneak beer out the window to a friend and then sell them on Sunday morning. He was 7 years of age.

Major Violence in the Home.

Has vivid memories of childhood violence where his step-father would get drunk and beat up his mother. He was rarely beaten himself, however, and after his mother's death, he went to live with his real father who never physically abused him.

Suffered Severe Emotional Trauma as Child.

At age five he suffered the severe emotional trauma of witnessing the shooting death of his mother. He saw his step-father pull the trigger and heard his mother cry out. She fell back on the bed and he walked in and looked down at her in shock, knowing that she was dead. This was followed by an ordeal with hours of questioning by the police.

He carried around a lot of rage about this incident swearing that he'd shoot his step-father on sight.

Home Environment.

Before he was of school-age he would be separated from his brothers and sisters as they would go off to residential school for 10 months of the year.

He used to roll cigarettes for his grandmother and has been smoking since he was six years old.

Feelings of Shame about Extended Family.

He would feel ashamed when he saw his grandmother drunk in public and would later feel guilt because of his feelings. He used to try and avoid her and felt a good deal of conflict. He felt shame and felt guilty because he didn't feel proud of her.

Education

Negative Education Experiences.

At the education institution there was a real "wall" between the students and the teachers. If you wanted to get along with everybody it meant loyalty to friends and not to the institution, even if it meant suffering.

Residential school was a very negative experience and he was removed from the home for the entire school year.

Residential school was an extremely rigid, negative educational experience which he considered worse than the military detention camp he also spent time in. It was an abusive and punishing environment. They had their pockets sewn up, so they wouldn't touch their genitals, were made to play in sub-zero temperatures without mitts, were regularly given beatings, and once -because he swore at a nun - he was made to stand in the same spot, without food or water for two full days and nights. He was not allowed to leave to go to the washroom and urinated onto himself numerous times. The children were often told that they were "going to grow up and be drunken bums just like their fathers". Many lived up to the negative stereotypes.

Success for him often meant survival of the horrible times. He found success by surviving the two day ordeal of standing in one spot, and he survived residential school itself as well as four times in the detention centre in the armed forces.

The only real positive experience that came out of residential school was that he bonded with the people with whom he struggled and suffered with.

Despite this abuse he managed to achieve good grades.

He adjusted to the negative environment by lowering his expectations. "I guess I just didn't expect too much. . ."

School made him forget his Cree and his father didn't speak English. They went through a period where they didn't "speak to each other much" when he was an adolescent, and the language barrier increased their emotional distance.

Culture

Racism - Experienced Some.

Was fired from a job (as an adult) and believes it was at least partly because he was an Indian.

Other

His dislike of being "dictated to" led to his being sent to detention camp four times when he was in the air force. Surviving it was - like in residential school - a success story.

He drank a great deal when he was in the armed forces.

He feels both uncertain and confident now. At times he feels very unsure of himself and at other times very confident.

If he goes out drinking - and has about 10 beer - he'll feel down the next morning. Drinking affects his self-esteem level.

His concept of self-esteem is such that he doesn't believe it's good to have too much. To him, self-esteem means thinking you're better than others.

> High self-esteem equals being the best - which means being better than others - and that's not good.

5a. Lou: Positive Themes

Family and Extended Family

Mother.

Had a very close relationship with his mother. She was very important to him. He experienced a lot of encouragement and enthusiasm from his mother - especially regarding education.

Grandfather.

In the past the support system was very good with a close, positive relationship with both his mother and grandfather.

He experienced a lot of encouragement and enthusiasm from his grandfather.

His grandfather was available for discussion of major life decisions. He offered advice that was followed. He was supportive of education and encourage hard work. A good deal of time was spent with his grandfather, who provided a cultural education. He taught using nature and by example.

The experience with his grandfather is deeply engrained and still with him and still active today. He felt "good" about himself because of his grandfather, who was an extremely positive influence in his life.

His grandfather has been the most positive influence in his life. He still carries a lot of the lessons of his childhood - taught by his grandfather - with him and applies them to the world today. He has also developed a very strong sense of pride in being Native because of his grandfather.

Personal improvement was important. This value was passed down from his grandparents.

The sense of feeling understood by his wife is very important.

Large Supportive Extended Family.

Has a good support system that presently includes good communication relationship with a supportive wife and close friends and family.

This extended family - which included his mother and grandfather and now includes family on his wife's side - is extremely important. Success, he believes, comes from support, it is not gained individually.

Value System.

Material aspect of life is valued - but there has to be "more".

Education

Significant Impact of Others Outside Family.

In general they were a fairly positive influence, though none in particular stick out.

Positive Education Experiences.

Unlike older brothers and sisters - who went to residential school - his experience of school was very positive. He was encouraged by both mother and grandfather, and did not feel culturally severed as did his brothers and sisters.

Residential school had a detrimental effect on his older siblings which was demonstrated in their not having ever "done anything for themselves". They seemed to lose their connection to the family unit. It was as though they had been destroyed or distorted.

Schooling, however, changed for him. There were no more residential schools. Local people became involved in the school day. Lessons were culturally relevant and there seemed to be at least some degree of respect for the native culture. Support was also received at home to work hard.

The grade 8 year was tough because of opposing value systems - his grandfather's cultural education as opposed to the public school education - and there was more of an attempt to assimilate. He had a strong cultural bond which assimilation was threatening and so he rebelled.

There was some degree of confusion because of the way his grandfather taught using nature and "reality" and school introduced intangible goals. There was a loss of sight of what they were going to be and where they were going.

Positive Parental Attitude Towards Education.

Both mother and grandfather had encouraged him a great deal regarding getting an education.

Further education was encouraged by support system.

Education was highly valued by mother and grandfather. Received encouragement to take advantage of it.

Culture

Exposure to Traditional Skills.

Received a lot of support and a strong "cultural education" from his grandfather who demonstrated that there was a lot to learn from nature.

He learned lessons about interactions in nature that are still with him, and still applied in his life today. Deep lessons - like the idea of cooperation - were learned in observation of nature.

Exposure to Nature.

Yes. See "Exposure to Traditional Skills"

Developed Strong Sense of Nativeness.

He believes that "nativeness" is always present, though it's just ONE part of the whole person. It never stopped him from doing what he wanted to do.

Felt positive when the dominant society showed respect for aspects of native culture. This happened in courses that emphasized understanding nature, and involvement in groups such as Junior Rangers. It built self-esteem to be respected by white people for who you were and what you knew. It felt nice when they asked your opinion.

A very strong sense of pride, instilled primarily by his grandfather contributed to his being able to view his nativeness very positively. When white children would call him "Indian" names (like Cherokee and Running Bear) they failed to be taken negatively.

Other

Nativeness did not pose problems in terms of careers, and in some cases enhanced opportunities. It was "something more" to offer.

There are two things in the world that make a person progress. Knowing that the opportunities are there and knowing the type of conditions that are there. Opportunities divided by the number of conditions equals mobility.

There are both positive and negative aspects to any opportunity. There's always a positive aspect, no matter how tough it is.

We have power and control because we understand what we have to offer.

He feels we should "accept a challenge because there are ways of making things happen. Jump at opportunities. When you see them, go after them. Sit back and evaluate what you have done. Establish reasonable goals - ones you can achieve. Know what can satisfy you. Establish goals. Substantiate the information that you have. Evaluate and assess. I want to demonstrate to my people through my successes that it is possible."

5b. Lou: Negative Themes

Education

Negative Education Experiences.

Experienced some degree of "cultural confusion" in making transition from the freedom of the natural setting to the structured environment of the classroom.

Culture

Racism - Experienced Some.

Success resulted in the support system on his family side becoming questionable.

As material success increased there was a separation between the world he was entering and the world he grew up in. A sense of distance began with his brothers. They didn't feel comfortable in his new (materially successful) surroundings, and felt embarrassed when he came to visit them in their "poorer" homes. Distance was not felt when they met away from either his home or theirs. Material success resulted in alienation from family.

Became viewed as a "whiteman's Indian" and as not being an Indian anymore.

This distance increased as he became more successful, getting a university degree and teaching. The materialism put distance between him and his family, and closed the distance between him and his new (white) in-laws.

Experienced some degree of racism socially. Worked to overcome it and gain respect. Usually received respect from customers in terms of nativeness.

Sense of acceptance by whites grew as he "proved" himself, as he succeeded. Material gain increased sense of acceptance by whites.

6a. Mike: Positive Themes

Family and Extended Family

Father.

Strict discipline has had a positive effect on him, though he didn't think so at the time. In reflecting back he now sees that those people were trying to teach him and that the discipline was for a good reason.

Grandfather and Grandmother.

He spent a lot of time with grandparents "traditionally", on weekends and summer holidays. Grandfather taught him many traditional skills - like techniques for snaring rabbits.

Really enjoyed spending a lot of time with them. The time there was great. He laughed a lot and learned from them. The lessons he learned are still with him and he applies the things he's learned to his life today.

Grandparents disciplined in a sort of warm, humble, light-mannered way. Feels that this is good, though there is the possibility in being too "laid back" and having the full force of your discipline not come through.

Gained some degree of positive thinking from grandparents also. They helped put a "perspective" on his life. "Try to make the best of it."

Grandfather (on father's side) was also a teacher to him. They would sit down over a pot of tea and talk for hours at a time. He developed listening habits very early and would spend most of the time listening. He discovered that you can learn from listening.

He was able to go to his grandfather for counsel and advice when he had a problem.

His grandparents were an extremely positive and important influence.

He developed habits of reflecting on what happens. He reflects back on past experiences to direct him in his present life.

Large Supportive Extended Family.

Parents had an "easy-going" attitude. If they ran into difficulties the mother and father didn't take it as being so drastic and they tried to take a positive out of a negative. They tried to impress on the children the attitude that "It's not so bad - things could be a lot worse." He developed a positive attitude from this.

There was a lot of socializing, visiting and sharing within the immediate and extended families. There was a real feeling of closeness in the Indian community (on the reserve). Someone would kill a moose and two or three families would share. For 12-15 years the families within the extended family were constantly together. He finds that he misses the sense of community nowadays since the families get together far less often.

Other Extended Family (Uncles, Cousins).

Lived with uncle for two years and it was a very positive experience. Developed a real closeness to him. Learned to express his feelings and not to keep things bottled up inside. "It's like taking your backpack off."

Significant Impact of Others Outside Family.

The character of one woman - who was "really professional and very disciplined and assertive" - influenced his previously sexist attitudes. Women in his culture are traditionally seen in a housekeeping role, but his off-reserve influence changed this sexist view. He no longer wanted his sisters to be "inferior to anyone". It also affected his view of his parents and he didn't like that his mother was inferior to his father.

Humor in the Home.

Though parents were strict disciplinarians, there was a lot of humor in the family.

Education

Significant Impact of Others Outside Family.

Reinforcement by teachers had a powerful effect on him. Kindnesses of teacher who took time to spend with them and who took them (he and his classmates) on outdoor camps were a very positive influence.

One teacher had a significant effect on him because of his kindness and encouragement. A single expression of caring has stayed with him all these years as a treasured memory.

Positive Education Experiences.

He went to Residential School, although it was in the latter years of the existence of these schools, and therefore the environment wasn't as strict as it was when his parents attended.

Residential School was mainly a good, positive experience as it instilled a sense of discipline and helped develop spirituality and "praying to the Great One".

Culture

Exposure to Traditional Skills.

See "Grandfather" section above.

Exposure to Nature.

Enjoyed the peace of nature. Spent much time in isolated, solitary places.

Positive from the Negative

Community Violence and Tragedies.

Seeing alcoholism around him when he grew up (on the reserve) made him vow not to let it happen to him.

Moving Away From Reserve/Community to Attend School.

Moved to the city at age 16 to attend school and this was a tough adjustment. Initially he had difficulty adjusting to the isolation of not mingling and socializing. School was intimidating but the counselor offered support and this was helpful.

While playing "hookey" he was picked up by police and made to stand in an identification line where a young girl was trying to identify her rapist. The fear of being incorrectly identified as the rapist had a positive effect on him in that he was far less inclined to skip school from then on. He also developed a respect for policemen.

The tough adjustment of being away from home - while attending school - forced him to make plans and goals.

Being away from home and struggling made him look for his identity. It helped him clarify his identity. He struggled with cultural conflict - feeling stuck between two worlds - in trying to find himself. The positive influences in his life - including those positive teachers - gave him strength to carry on.

He didn't have a strong understanding of his nativeness when he moved away to go to school (at age 16) and didn't understand what native identity was supposed to be. Felt desire to express symbol of his nativeness when in the white school, and wore a moosehide string around his forehead.

He doesn't feel bitter about assimilation because he has had sufficient positive experiences.

Has gotten into discussions with other native people who have claimed that he isn't "Indian" and they have used the term "apple-Indian" (red on the outside but white on the inside) with him. He dislikes racism from native people as well as from whites.

Other

Many Positive Experiences.

All in all his past experiences have been extremely positive. Many significant people contributed to his personal development and he has had many positive experiences.

He feels good about where he is because of where he's been and what's happened.

6b. Mike: Negative Themes

Family

Minor Violence in the Home.

His parents were strict disciplinarians and if he did something wrong he "definitely knew it" The method of being more strict has its good points and also has its bad.

Culture

Racism - Experienced Some.

To him, some things that are called "racism" really aren't.

D. Theme Tables

The following table is designed to provide an overview of the various themes that emerged during the analysis of the protocols, and lists any theme that was observed in at least 50 % of the subjects. A word of caution, however, must be added. The table accurately illustrates the "frequency" of the themes but does NOT demonstrate the degree of importance and influence that each carries in the lives of the subjects. For instance, the influence of "grandfathers" and "exposure to nature" both emerged in four of the six subjects. The influence of the grandfather, however, was described as a far more significant theme by the subjects, and one that carried a much greater degree of influence. The two themes emerged equally as often, but are not equivalent in their degree of importance. That aspect was discussed in the first section of this chapter (Subject Profiles) and will be covered again in chapter V.

Positive Themes

The themes listed in the following table represent significant positive experiences. Some incidents/influences could have occurred (e.g. "returning to school after dropping out,") without having had a significantly positive effect, and therefore wouldn't be listed.

Y = YES it was a significantly POSITIVE influence
N = Mentioned as a negative influence
- = Not mentioned

Table 1
Clusters of Themes - Positive

Family and Extended Family	Donna	Linda	Patricia	Lester	Lou	Mike
Mother	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	-
Father	Y	N**	N	N	-	-
Grandfather	-	Y	Y	-	Y*	Y
Grandmother	-	Y	-	Y	-	Y
Large, supportive	Y	N	-	Y	Y	Y
Other Extended Family (uncles, cousins)	Y	-	Y	Y	-	Y

Education	Donna	Linda	Patricia	Lester	Lou	Mike
Significant Impact of Others Outside Family (Teachers)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Positive Education Experiences	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y
Completion of High School Education	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-
Positive Parental Attitude Towards Education	Y	Y	N	-	Y	-

Culture	Donna	Linda	Patricia	Lester	Lou	Mike
Exposure to Traditional Skills	-	Y	-	Y	Y	Y
Exposure to Nature	-	Y	-	Y	Y	Y

* Described as the most positive influence in his life
** Stepfather
*** Achieved good grades only later in the education process

Positive from a Negative	Donna	Linda	Patricia	Lester	Lou	Mike
Community Violence and Tragedies	Y	Y	-	-	-	Y
Moving Away From Reserve/ Community to Attend School (Exposure to "Outside World")	Y	Y	-	-	-	Y

Negative Themes

Themes listed here represent significant negative experiences.

Y = YES it was a significantly negative influence
N = The opposite was mentioned
- = Not mentioned

Table 2
Clusters of Themes - Negative

Family	Donna	Linda	Patricia	Lester	Lou	Mike
Father's influence	N	Y	Y	Y	-	-
Alcoholic Father	-	Y*	Y	Y	-	-
Raised in Poverty	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-
Major Violence in the Home (beatings)	-	Y*	Y	Y	-	-
Suffered Severe Emotional Trauma as Child	-	Y	Y	Y	-	-

Education	Donna	Linda	Patricia	Lester	Lou	Mike
Negative Education Experiences	N	Y	-	Y	N	N

Culture	Donna	Linda	Patricia	Lester	Lou	Mike
Racism - Experienced Some	-	-	Y	Y	Y	N**
Racism - Experienced a Great Deal	-	Y	Y	-	N	N

*Stepfather
**Experienced very little racism

V. DISCUSSION

A. Introduction

I had worked diligently for months on this thesis prior to even meeting the subjects I was later to interview. Hour after hour found me huddled between the library stacks thumbing through periodicals, reading sections of books and searching constantly for new references as I studied the research of psychologists and educators. I was later to be be amazed, however, at the manner in which a whole new dimension would be added to this library endeavor when I began hearing the actual experiences of my subjects.

New Dimension

My own learning was suddenly brought to life and given a much greater depth. I was amazed that after having literally spent months in the university libraries, that I could come away from single ninety minute interview feeling that my understanding had just taken on a whole new and vibrant dimension. To read descriptive statistics - even those emphasizing tragedies - is informative on one level, but to be taken into the actual lived experience and to see the tears once again well up in saddened eyes and hear the details of the suffering caused by constant racism and inhumane abuse, is quite another. Some of my subjects suffered a great deal in the names of education, and religion, and simply because of who they are.

Understanding the Experience of Native People

I am not sure that many white people can truly understand some of the experiences encountered by some native persons. I taught school on a reserve for three years and for the first time in my life experienced (to a small degree) what it was like to be part of a visible minority. Even in this mild form it wasn't pleasant.

Can you imagine - starting as early as age six - being taken away from your family for ten months of each year and being placed in a "learning" institution, where you are punished for speaking your own language? Where you are physically beaten for expressing the traditions and values your parents taught you? Where punishments included standing in a single spot without moving for two days and nights, with no food, and having to urinate onto yourself countless times because you aren't allowed to go to the washroom? Can you understand that? Many native people can because they attended the infamous Residential Schools. Some have stories they refuse to repeat because they doubt that anyone would believe the horror.

Constant Rejection

Can you understand the feeling of never being allowed to "fit in"? Of being thrust into a completely foreign environment where nearly all the other children are of a different race, and you are threatened and rejected nearly every day? Can you imagine not being able to play with other children because of who you are? Picture yourself in another country where you are the only white child. You want friends and want to play, but you're told to go home. No one can play with you because you're a dirty little white kid. Picture yourself growing up with fifteen years of that.

I would like to discuss these areas and have divided this chapter into two main sections. First I will look at the categories of significance and competence and how they relate to native culture, and secondly will look at a model of self-esteem development. In the first section I will once again consider Coopersmith's antecedents and how they relate to native people. In the second I will propose a model of self-esteem development that emerged from the thematic analysis.

B. Putting Coopersmith in Focus

Much of the huge volume of available self-esteem literature is based on the observations of educators or the insights of program and curriculum developers - and not on controlled, systematic research. Though a great deal of this material is unquestionably of value, programs and policies in this area are too far-reaching in their effect to be based on random observation. There is need for a solid research foundation.

For this reason I chose to apply the work of Stanley Coopersmith in this thesis. His conclusions are based on years of study and systematic observation. As well, his outline of the antecedents of self-esteem - described below - provides a working model that is the most useful and practical that I could find.

His findings and conclusions are not, however, based on a North American Indian population and must, I believe, be interpreted and put into perspective. I would like, therefore, to use Coopersmith's antecedents as a tool to consider the themes that arose in my research, but also to use the themes themselves - as a cultural perspective - to look at Coopersmith's antecedents. Are there aspects of some native cultures that invalidate aspects of these antecedents? Are the claims that he makes generalizable to native people? Are there aspects of native cultures that are not included under his theoretical umbrella?

Coopersmith's Antecedents of Self-Esteem

Stanley Coopersmith (1981) observed that self-esteem develops in a number of ways and outlined four "sources", each of which can contribute to our overall level of self-esteem. The four categories are significance, competence, power and virtue. Coopersmith found that significance and competence were much more important than virtue and power.

Success in the area of significance is measured by the concern, attention and love expressed by others, and is expressed in terms of acceptance and popularity. Polar opposites are rejection and isolation.

Competence is described as the successful performance in meeting demands for achievement. Success in the area of competence is marked by high levels of performance with the level and task varying with age. Coopersmith allows for both intrinsic and extrinsic competence. Intrinsic competence stems from a sense of efficacy as the child begins to encounter the environment, and provides an innate source of satisfaction that is highly reinforcing in and of itself and not dependent on external sources. Extrinsic competence is marked by high levels of performance, with the levels and tasks varying with age. Academic and athletic performance are two areas used to judge competence in preadolescent males.

Success in the area of power is measured by the degree of influence a person has over the course of action of one's life. This power can be measured by the degree of recognition and respect that person receives from others and by the weight that is given to his or her opinions and rights.

Success in the area of virtue is marked by adherence to a code of moral, ethical, and religious principles. These include moral restrictions in areas such as stealing, sexual activity, and obedience, as well as the commission - or omission - of certain deeds. Persons who have internalized religious codes, feel positively about themselves as they attain these "higher" goals.

Because of Coopersmith's emphasis on the importance of significance and competence, I will direct most of my focus on these two antecedents while considering the themes of my subjects. Power and virtue will also be discussed, but in less detail.

Interaction of the Antecedents

According to Coopersmith, it is possible to achieve high self-esteem with a high degree of attainment in any of the four areas. Thus it is theoretically possible that a person may experience a great deal of acceptance and affection from significant others in his or her life (significance), and thus experience high self-esteem despite achieving poorly in the other categories (power, virtue, competence). It is also theoretically possible to achieve a high degree of success in a category he or she does not regard as important, such as competence, and conclude that he or she is unworthy because of poor success in an area that is highly valued, such as significance (Coopersmith, 1981). Thus it is not simply the degree of success that is important, but rather the degree of success in those categories we personally consider to be of most importance.

Themes of Significance

Of the four antecedents, Coopersmith (1981) claims that significance and competence are much more important than virtue and power as sources of self-esteem. The results of my research seem to concur with this (for my six subjects) with an added emphasis on significance.

Extended Family

The subjects in this study placed a great deal of emphasis on significance, particularly regarding the family and extended family. Mothers played a key role as positive influences in four of the subjects and five of the six spoke at length of grandparents having been significantly positive influences. These grandparents were often described by terms like "teacher", "holy", "humble" and time spent with them - often on weekends and summer holidays - was not uncommonly described in glowing terms.

Grandparents

Mike speaks glowingly of the "great" times he spent with his grandparents on weekends and summer holidays. He remembers the laughter and the humble sort of discipline. Both he and Lou learned childhood lessons from their grandparents that are still with them and still being applied today. Mike's grandparents were always available for advice and counsel. For Lester and his troubled life, his grandmother's house was a place of refuge. She accepted him without condition. Patricia remembers her grandfather as a "holy man" who was a wonderful influence. Lou recalls the enthusiasm and the supportive encouragement he received from his grandfather. He feels good about himself today because of this extremely positive influence.

Mothers

When Linda was suffering the abuse of racism and alienation at school, it was her mother who was her support. It was the mother who fled with the family, to escape the violence of Linda's stepfather. Lou speaks of his mother as being the same sort of positive encouraging influence as his grandfather, and while the violent ways of Patricia's father brought her constant shame at school, she remembers the positive, loving influence of her mother.

Cousins, Uncles and Aunts

As well, four of the six subjects spoke of large, supportive extended families that often included numerous cousins, uncles and aunts, as well as grandparents. Donna tells of the support system of cousins and how even as children the group was accepting and supportive, and how rarely a child was ridiculed. Mike looks back with fondness at those periods of his youth when there was great deal of socializing, visiting and sharing within the extended family, and he describes a feeling of closeness in the community. A hunter would kill a moose and two or three families would share.

Negative Significant Others

On the whole, the subjects experienced a high degree of violence in their homes and half of them reported an alcoholic father (or stepfather) as a significantly negative influence. This influence led to negative feelings about themselves.

The Effects of Racism and Isolation on Significance

Four of the six subjects experienced racism as children and two of them experienced it to a traumatic degree. Both Linda and Patricia were ostracized and alienated because they were Native. Linda moved with her family to flee from a violent step father to a number of larger centres. Here she was no longer part of the majority as she was on her reserve. She was suddenly thrust into white schools where she and her brothers and sisters were amongst the only Natives. She was threatened and ostracized constantly. This negative influence of Linda's father is one of significance, though clearly the alienation at school is an issue of Coopersmith's antecedent of power. This will be discussed in more detail below.

The escapades of their fathers (stepfather in Linda's case) followed these two girls to school. The rape conviction of Patricia's father filled her with such shame that she walked down back lanes on her way to school. Stories of their violence, their drinking and their time spent in jail made their way into the classrooms. Patricia suffered through a humiliating cold environment at school. She was ostracized and only allowed to play with her "own kind".

Nature as a Significant Other

Exposure to nature was commonly listed as an important theme by my subjects and at first I thought it was beyond Coopersmith's classification. As I reread the transcripts, however, I began to get the sense that nature was - for some of my subjects - like a significant other.

Linda spoke of it as a revealing, satisfying influence. Lou learned from his grandfather that nature is a teacher from which much can be learned, and he also learned to respect it a great deal. Some of the ideas that he applies in life today were learned as a boy from nature. Lester spoke of a closeness to nature that was extremely positive and one that he loved. Mike spent much time in isolated, solitary places enjoying the peace of nature.

Nature seems to have an influence that not only taught them, but brought them peace. Their relationship with nature was cherished and valued.

Self-Esteem without Significance?

As mentioned previously, Coopersmith claims (1981) that it may be possible for an individual to attain high self-esteem by notable attainment in any of the four antecedents, and that this may occur even when attainment in other areas is poor.

My subjects spoke with such depth regarding their support systems, families and extended families that I have difficulty picturing them achieving poor attainment in the area of significance and still achieving high self-esteem because of high attainment in, for instance, competence. The family and extended family seemed crucial to the levels of positive self regard of my subjects. Significance - with family and extended family - is an area that is held in very high regard. Conversely, I can agree with Coopersmith in that a high degree of attainment in significance can go a long way towards achieving and maintaining high self-esteem despite poor attainment in competence, virtue and power.

Themes of Competence

High School Graduation as Source of Competence

All my subjects completed high school, though some of them returned after quitting. Five of them listed this achievement as a significantly positive one in their lives. Simply returning to the education system after dropping out was significantly positive for two of them. After dropping out of high school, Patricia was left with a depressing sense of feeling stuck. Completion of the grade twelve equivalency was a major success, and an accomplishment that opened other doors to her. Her self-concept began to change. She began to see herself as competent and it increased her sense of self-worth. Graduation led to a career and to financial return which - for someone raised in poverty - was a powerfully reinforcing experience. Achievements in education later in life boosted her self-esteem.

Lou had the good fortune of attending school just as the residential schools were being phased out. He saw the negative effects that education had had on his older brothers and sisters (who attended residential schools) and describes them as having been destroyed or distorted. Schooling was changing when he started, however, and local people became involved in the school day. Support was received at home to work hard, and education was highly valued by both his mother and grandfather.

Shame and Poverty: Effects on Competence

I can't help but think how poverty led to embarrassment and humiliation and how this resulted in increased isolation. This social maladjustment would almost certainly have seriously affected their school performance. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to establish a direct correlation between these experiences and academic achievement, I believe that the alienation and loneliness they experienced because of racism and the negative attitudes towards poverty, as well as the shame they felt because of their father's violence, would seriously interfere with their potential for school success.

It is easy to imagine how this might happen. Picture Janey, a native child with above average intelligence. She grows up on a reserve and because her stepfather was becoming progressively more violent, she and her family escape to a nearby white town. Janey and her family begin living on welfare. They move into a cheap house in a run down part of town, and have no money for new clothes. Janey goes to school dressed in old ones. She and her brothers and sisters are amongst the few Natives in a school of whites. After overcoming the initial shock, she nearly makes a friend at school, but the other girl's mother hears about it and tells her daughter not to play with the "dirty Indian kids." Janey is told to play with her "own kind." At school the boys call her hurtful names and constantly threaten her physically. They chase her home nearly every day. News of her father's drunkenness, violence and time spent in jail makes it to the school and the other children blurt it out in class. Janey comes to school everyday to find a cold, lonely environment.

She is rejected and ostracized. When she goes out at recess, she is cruelly teased. When she walks home at the end of the day she is often threatened. This is the environment in which Janey "learns". This is the environment in which she is supposed to obtain one of the most important sources of self-esteem - competence.

Competence and Traditional Skills

Something that some of my subjects had access to - that many white children their age don't have - is exposure to traditional life styles.

Time spent learning "traditional skills" seems to benefit in two ways. It offers opportunity for success through competence, and it also seems to provide quality time with a significant other. Four of the subjects spoke of learning traditional skills as being an important positive influence.

Linda would spend her summers hunting and fishing with her family. She was taught skills such as setting up snares and checking paths, and knew how to skin rabbits and cook ducks. As a young boy, Mike would travel with his grandfather and mimic his methods pretending to be a "real hunter." Mike speaks lovingly of these times that he and his grandfather shared laughter over his imitating these traditional skills.

Success in learning traditional skills (competence) was a good source of self-esteem for some of the subjects, and may possibly have offset some of the difficulty of struggling to attain a sense of personal competence in a difficult and unwelcoming school environment.

Competence in "Whiteman's Education"

Coopersmith explains (p. 39) that despite achieving a high level of attainment in one of the four sources, self-esteem will not be enhanced unless that particular source is valued. Picture the child whose parents - for whatever reason - hold a negative view of education. If, as is sometimes the case, school is negatively viewed as "whiteman's education" and a young native student begins to achieve a high level of competence, then imagine the potential confusion experienced by the child trying to sort through this. His teacher praises him for these marvelous achievements, but then he returns home and his parents scoff at him and offer no encouragement. How strong a source of self-esteem can a high degree of attainment in school competence be if the child's family - and thus indirectly the child himself - doesn't consider it an area to be valued?

The Effect of Significance on Competence

Although competence and significance - as well as the other aspects of self-esteem - are described individually they are interrelated. Though there was no documented study done of the effect of Linda's constant loneliness and rejection, it isn't difficult to imagine the effects it would have had.

The nearly constant prejudice she experienced - from some of the teachers as well - resulted in deep feelings of alienation. The abuse was constant. She was bothered on the bus, in the classroom, and at recess. It isn't surprising that she lost her sense of motivation and that both her attendance and academic standing dropped dramatically. School had become an unwelcoming, threatening place and this interfered tremendously in her ability to achieve. The loneliness and alienation affected her motivation and ability to learn, and that in turn caused her marks to seriously drop - which again affected her motivation. It was an ongoing "vicious cycle" with a deepening negative spiral.

She wasn't succeeding academically and thus another potential major source of self-esteem - competence - was seriously hindered. It was like a "domino effect" and the direction was downwards. The room for success Linda's life at that time was minimal. There were no friends, little support, almost no motivation, and no classroom success. One negative experience led to another and the results fed back into the cycle.

Virtue and Power

As mentioned previously, Coopersmith outlines that significance and competence are more important sources of self-esteem than virtue and power, and consequently the latter two will be discussed in less detail.

Virtue.

Coopersmith speaks of virtue being the adherence to moral and ethical and guiding principles, and that parents establish the guiding traditions and indicate the behaviors by which they can be realized.

I must add that in the case of my subjects, the grandparents played significant roles in the development of moral standards. Grandparents played significantly positive roles in five of the six subjects and were not uncommonly described as teachers.

Ethical and religious principles were not discussed at great length by the six persons in my study as being significantly positive influences in how they felt about themselves.

Power.

Coopersmith's concept of power has two aspects to it. First, he refers to the ability to influence other people, and secondly speaks of the degree of influence one has over the course of action in one's life.

Although the data are not an actual part of this study, I recall corresponding with a number of native (Cree) persons in the development of a native self-esteem project. Numerous times the emphasis on the value of "extended family and band before self" arose. Of course a wide generalization cannot be made from such statements, though it does demonstrate a difference in values for some native people. With some, there is a tendency towards not separating yourself from the group. When Donna completed the SEI, she had great difficulty responding to the item (and in the end left it blank) "I am popular with persons my own age." She had difficulty with the term "popular" because it "set you apart as though you are putting yourself on a pedestal" and considering yourself better than someone else. She was raised in a culture, she added, where everyone was thought to be equal.

Three of the subjects had little influence over the course of action in their lives, and were at the mercy of some seriously negative influences: racism, poverty, alienation and violence. Lester, Linda and Patricia had almost no sense of control over the alcoholism and violence of their fathers (or stepfathers), or the racism and isolation at school. Though my subjects made no major references to a lack of social power as a people, in reference to their adult lives, this was certainly experienced by some of them as school-aged children. As outlined previously, the school system was often a barrier to achieving a sense of competence. Because of racism and alienation, it was often a barrier to achieving a sense of social power as well.

Social Behaviors in Cultural Focus

Coopersmith (1981) writes of three social behaviors theoretically related to self-esteem: popularity, independence, and leadership. He claims that persons with high self-esteem excel in these areas. I couldn't help but think how inappropriate - in some native cultural settings - these three behaviors are. As mentioned earlier, Withycombe (1973) proposes that cultural differences must be considered in test interpretations. He suggests that the correlates of self-concept for white children cannot simply be expected to be the same for Indian children. Their self-concepts may be equally as high and simply correlated to other values. As well, a number of Coopersmith's indicators of low self-esteem (for example shyness, subdued speaking manner, refraining from expressing opinions) are approved behaviors in some Indian cultures (Lefley, 1975). The fact that the correlates of self-concept for Indian children may not exactly duplicate those for whites, does not establish that Indian self-concepts are lower. The value system must be taken into account.

Withycombe (1973) emphasizes the importance of cultural appropriateness in the constructs we attempt to measure. These factors led to Cress and O'Donnel (1975) declaring Coopersmith's Self-Esteem Inventory an invalid measure for use with Sioux youth.

Popularity.

Withycombe (1973) wrote that constructs such as "popularity", which are often used as indicators of self-esteem, may be of little concern in some Indian cultures. I instantly think of when Donna had great difficulty answering the item, "I'm popular with persons my own age" on the Self-Esteem Inventory. To her, the very word "popular" implied that you were setting yourself apart and putting yourself on a pedestal as being better than others. Donna adds that she was raised in a culture where everyone was considered equal and the concept of popularity conflicted with that value.

Independence.

As I consider the concept of independence, I think of the emphasis on extended family and being part of the larger group. I can't count the number of times I've heard and read of native people speaking of the tribe and extended family before self. Donna spoke of attempting to include everyone. When Lou became self-supporting and financially successful in the white world, he was viewed by his brothers as not being "Indian" anymore. At least some forms of independence resulted in alienation.

Leadership.

The third concept Coopersmith considers theoretically related to self-esteem is leadership. Again I think back to teaching and living on the Cree reserve in Saskatchewan and to how many times I heard of the Indian way of teaching by example, and how some forms of leadership are "white man's ways". I think of Mike, Linda, Lou and Lester speaking of how their grandparents taught them. They were not leaders in the sense that they took charge and organized groups and offered formal lessons. They quietly went about their teaching. They were leaders but they taught humbly and led by example. native cultures do have leaders, but the concept of leader may be less individualized, and more a part of the whole.

Conclusion.

The definitions of these concepts must be clarified. What form of leadership? What type of popularity? These behaviors, depending on how they are defined, can be inappropriate for some native peoples, and in those cases where they do exist, the concepts must be culturally interpreted.

C. A Pattern of Self-Esteem Development

As illustrated in the above thematic analysis there are many, many factors that emerged as influential themes in the self-esteem development of my subjects. Some themes arose only once and with a single subject, while others arose time and time again as powerful influences. It is these themes that I would now like to discuss.

Three Factors

It becomes very clear as I read through the descriptions of themes that three distinct factors emerged in my subject group:

1. There were aspects of their cultural background that - in and of themselves - could provide the basis for solid self-esteem development. These are the aspects of native culture that I believe are solid enough contributors as antecedents to promote a natural progression to healthy self-esteem (e.g. the support system of the extended family). For discussion sake, I will refer to these as Sources because of their capacity to promote high self-esteem by themselves.

There were also numerous additional positive influences that contributed to higher self-esteem, but which weren't sufficiently influential - by themselves - to determine a high degree of self-esteem. These are listed in detail in the previous chapter.

2. There were also influences in their childhood worlds that - in and of themselves - could block or destroy this self-esteem development. Some subjects began the progression towards healthy self-esteem provided by the Sources, but somewhere along the way, this growth was interupted - or blocked (e.g. extreme home violence and alcoholism, school racism). These factors I refer to as Barriers.

3. There were secondary influences that provided renewed hope and direction to those whose self-esteem development had been seriously damaged. With all the subjects there were times when positive factors "re-intervened" later in life following the negative influence of one of the Barriers. The subjects described details of how the weight of racism or a difficult school environment seriously affected the way they felt about themselves, and put them into a "tail-spin". Then a positive, caring teacher intervened and provided the support and encouragement that lifted them and offered some renewed hope. These influences I call Contributors and examples are encouraging teachers and adult successes. They are distinct from Sources in that they are not powerful enough to bring about a high degree of self-esteem in isolation of other factors, but rather they "contribute" to this end.

Sources and Barriers

Table 2 outlines the Sources, Barriers and Contributors for each of the six subjects. All of them except Lester and Patricia had a strong support system in their extended families, and three of the subjects had no Barriers.

The results of my data illustrate a number of interesting points. First, as mentioned above, I believe that there are aspects of native culture - especially regarding the extended family - that provide a very powerful and solid source of self-esteem . A good healthy extended family environment - including cousins, uncles and aunts, as well as the parents and grandparents, can provide a tremendous foundation for healthy personal development.

This point re-emphasizes itself time and time again as I read through the themes of my subjects. Because of her early extended family, Linda had the potential for a great deal of "significance". The time spent with her grandparents is spoken of glowingly. The reserve, which she describes as having been like a big family, was friendly and supportive (although she was ridiculed at school about her stepfather) and her mother was warm and caring. Her sense of significance was seriously interfered with by the influence of her violent, alcoholic stepfather. I can't help but think that he was the one major barrier that choked off the potential for a happy, contented, and caring childhood.

Unquestionably her stepfather was one of the most powerful negative influences on her life, but in many ways indirectly. Some of the Barriers definitely come from outside the native culture. It was because of Linda's stepfather that they fled the reserve, but once free of his influence, her self-esteem didn't exactly begin to soar. On the contrary, her self-esteem suffered most when they moved to the city. The dominant society and the white, city school offered her almost no feelings of significance whatsoever. In fact they provided a major Barrier and pushed her a long way in the other direction. Coopersmith (1981) speaks of isolation and rejection as the polar opposites to significance. The city school system led to both Linda and Patricia almost constantly experiencing these polar opposites and that interfered a great deal with their ability to learn and their motivation to succeed.

Table 3
Self-Esteem Development

Subject	Sources	Barriers	Contributors
Patricia	None*	Racism Poverty Violence in home	Teacher
Donna	Extended Family -cousins, parents, uncles, aunts	None	Teachers
Linda	Extended Family -grandfather -mother -friends and relatives	Violent, alcoholic stepfather Severe racism and isolation	Teachers
Lester	None*	Extreme violence in home Abusive school environment	Close friend Teachers Grandmother
Lou	Extended Family -grandfather -mother -support system	None	Teachers
Mike	Extended Family -grandfather -grandmother -brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts	None	Teachers

* Patricia did have a very influential grandfather and a caring mother and Lester had a caring grandmother, but the influences were not as strong as with the other subjects and therefore were not considered Sources.

Our Education System: A powerful influence

The themes that I've discussed throughout this thesis show the tremendous influence - both positive and negative - of the education system. When the classroom environment and the social interaction at school are filled with racism, it can devastate a developing sense of self-esteem. This can be complicated by poverty when native children are also alienated and ridiculed because of the manner in which they dress. Yet at the same time, teachers - especially encouraging and caring ones - can have a profound and lasting positive effect. Small acts of kindness and encouragement often provided a spark that kept alive a dying hope.

Barriers and Self-Esteem

According to the model discussed above and outlined in table 2 Donna, Lou and Mike should have the highest levels of self-esteem because they had solid Sources and no significant Barriers. Each had solid support systems in their extended families, and thus a powerful foundation of significance. Unlike the other three subjects, none of them suffered the seriously debilitating influences that seem to attack and undermine the base of self-esteem.

The results of Coopersmith's Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) supported this expectation. Donna, Lou and Mike did have the highest measures of self-esteem - by far. Lou had a perfect score of 100 while Mike and Donna both had scores of 92. The remaining scores were substantially lower. Linda and Lester had scores of 72 and Patricia had a score of 60.

The mean of my subjects is comparable with the scores found by Coopersmith in the general population (where the mean is between 70 and

80). I think that in light of the discussion in the literature review the results should be placed in proper context. Not only was this particular test found to be an invalid measure with some native youths (Cress and O'Donnell,1975) but much has been said about culturally inappropriate items (Lefley, 1975; Withycombe,1973). The importance of this issue was illustrated when Donna completed the SEI. She had great difficulty with item 8 (I'm popular with persons my own age) because she felt that describing herself as "popular" meant putting herself on a pedestal and she was raised to believe that everyone was equal - and in the end decided not to complete that particular item. Therefore if the SEI test results have any real contribution, it may be how the subjects scored in relation to each other. The main point to be made here is that the subjects fell into two distinct groups - the first substantially higher in self-esteem than the second. The first had no significant Barriers and the second had more than their share.

Limitations of the Study

In identifying the important themes in the lives of my subjects, I often remained at a structural level and didn't identify the underlying processes. The themes of "grandparents" and "mother" for instance, were identified as being positive influences, however, the underlying processes, (i.e. nurturing, caring, bonding, etc.) that may have been taking place through interaction with the grandparents and the mother weren't identified.

Identification of the underlying process was not sought at the theme level because it was my intention to interpret the themes through the "eyes" of Coopersmith's four antecedents of self-esteem - significance, competence, power and virtue. Utilizing the work of Coopersmith does provide a perspective of the underlying processes and identifies the manner with which the themes are directly related to self-esteem development - but does not provide a theme by theme analysis. In other words, my method doesn't identify what process is actually at work in each theme.

Additional research into the processes underlying the themes I identified could potentially extend beyond Coopersmith and into aspects of self-esteem and native people that are not accounted for in his work.

Conclusion

What does all this mean? I think that it means that there are aspects of native culture that are powerful contributors to high self-esteem and that both within the native environment and white society, there are factors that can devastate this progression towards high self-esteem.

I will discuss this further in the next chapter.

VI. IMPLICATIONS

Implications for Future Research

In looking at the implications of this thesis I would like to emphasize once again that as researchers we must be aware of the inaccuracies of overgeneralization, the use of inappropriate measures, and the manner in which results are often distorted when insufficient consideration is given to cultural boundaries. As is often the case, raw data cannot stand alone. It must be properly interpreted, put into focus and explained.

As I outlined in the literature review, to assume that findings specific to one native group can be generalized to all native peoples is both naive and dangerous. Significant differences exist within the native population depending on demographic and cultural circumstances.

As well, cultural differences must also be considered in test interpretations. Correlates of self-concept for white children cannot simply be expected to be the same for Indian children (Withycombe,1973). Their self-concepts may be equally as high and simply correlated to other values. Standard self concept instruments may be heavily weighted for behaviors that are culturally inappropriate for Natives, and self report on such items may bear little relationship to actual self-esteem levels (Lefley, 1974).

Implications for Self-Esteem Programs

All the self-esteem programs in the world will not help native children if they are living under the debilitating effect of violence and alcoholism in their home lives, and racism and constant rejection in their school lives. Alcoholism is an adult disease that destroys children. Racism is a cruel affliction whose constant ache wears away the spirit.

Self-esteem development requires not only the development of positive influences, but also the sheltering from seriously negative ones. Children must not only be nurtured - they must also be protected.

We must not simply focus on how to build high self-esteem, but also on how its development is being destroyed. A native child may come to a white school with the seed of healthy self-esteem well in place, only to have it destroyed. I think that in some cases we don't need to build high self-esteem, we need to stop what's already there from being destroyed.

Implications for White Schools

For white schools I think this implies the need for greater respect for the native peoples and their cultures. Racism cannot be allowed to prosper. It is a killer of self-esteem. It destroys natural, healthy growth. Who among us can live with being thought of as "trash" by all our peers?

We must do whatever is necessary to stop racism - whether that means the development of additional programs, including it as a curriculum topic, or meeting it head-on in the classroom and schoolyard. We cannot simply "throw" students of different races together, we need to truly integrate them. They must spend time together. They must be given opportunity to develop affinity and respect for each others' cultures.

Implications for Native People

The implications for native people are clear. There is much health and balance in their culture. The support provided by caring, extended families is unsurpassed and the influence is far-reaching. The traditional patterns are to be nurtured, valued and emulated. They are beautiful examples of providing young, delicate souls with the support they so desperately need.

The alcohol problems and the violence, however, are equally as devastating as the support system is valuable. Alcoholism and violence in the home seriously damage the children that grow up there. As Lester pointed out, they cease "growing" in the true sense of the word and they begin to learn how to "survive". Then they become adults and re-enter the cycle. They may themselves deal with their unresolved problems by turning to alcohol, and the years of torment and confusion can often rush out in violent rages of their own. The implications are clear. They cycle must be stopped.

Conclusions

After having spent intimate time with my subjects and after having spent many, many hours looking through their transcripts and considering the themes that emerged, I must once again say that there are many aspects to the lives of native people that the dominant society is simply not aware of. Many of them have had troubled childhoods and have faced and overcome - in some cases - obstacles greater than many of us even imagine. My respect for these native people and their culture has certainly grown. Their tradition of extended family support leaves me feeling envious. My understanding and respect for what many of them must face in their daily lives (e.g. abusive racism) has grown tremendously.

Self-esteem development is a complex process and many, many factors contribute to its development, both positively and negatively. native cultures have much to offer this development in a positive way. The problems of alcoholism, violence and racism, however, must be addressed so that native peoples may enjoy the self-esteem which is their due.

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